

# **LIVE ART SECTOR RESEARCH**

A REPORT MAPPING THE UK LIVE ART SECTOR

JUNE

2021

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# Foreword

Live Art in the UK came of age in the late twentieth century and has grown from strength to strength in the twenty-first century.

Today, Live Art practice spans a wide range of disciplines and artforms; is located in all kinds of traditional, unconventional and permissive cultural contexts; and is engaged in the most urgent critical discourses about the nature, role and responsibility of art and of artists. Live Art proposes new ways of thinking about, making, presenting, and encountering art. It foregrounds embodied and experiential practices; it creates space for underrepresented identities, issues and ideas to be seen and heard; it welcomes collaboration, interaction and participation; it embraces dissent, difference and difficulty; and it invites debate about who we are and the relations between peoples and places. In this questioning of what art can be, where it can be, who it can be, and what it can do, Live Art can be understood as a research engine of culture.

Andy Field (founder of Live Art organisation Forest Fringe) once said that Live Art is simultaneously ubiquitous and elusive. Although its *presence* can now be found in so many aspects of UK cultural life, Live Art's *absence* is still felt within dominant cultural narratives and in traditional art histories, critical debates, institutional contexts and funding programmes. This might partly be because Live Art is still a relatively new and unquantified sector. There had never been a comprehensive review of Live Art's achievements, nor an extensive analysis of its impact and influence.

Whilst recognising that much Live Art rejects dominant narratives and might not crave institutional approval or mainstream embrace, many working within the sector, and particularly members of the Live Art UK network, increasingly felt the need to redress this. We believed that there was an imperative for an in-depth investigation into the conditions in which Live Art exists to better understand the potential and challenges of its expanding parameters and reach, and to advocate for more awareness, support and investment in such ways of thinking and doing for the future. We were excited that Arts Council England backed our ambition to review Live Art, and particularly in relation to its own priorities and principles, and, with their support and guidance, the Live Art Development Agency, in partnership with Live Art UK, commissioned this unprecedented independent research project.

*Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* was undertaken by an exceptional collective of independent artists, researchers, thinkers, producers and activists. Their research began in Autumn 2019, but was paused in Spring 2020 when it became clear that the project must reflect and act in response to the immediate and lasting impacts of the unfolding events of 2020: the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the renewed calls for racial justice by the Black Lives Matter movement, and the fallout from Brexit. We are indebted

to the research team for so adeptly incorporating these urgent revisions in their process and plans, and to Arts Council England for offering additional support to enable this.

*Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* is an extensive, expansive and hugely significant piece of research. It has been realised through surveys, focus groups, literature reviews, case studies, and interviews, and the privileging of artists' voices through a collection of 'Perspectives' and the commissioning of artworks and writings that complement and contextualise the research's findings. It offers the first major overview of the landscape of Live Art, how it thinks and operates besides, within, and in relation to wider culture and to society, and the vital contributions it makes to so many lives.

*Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* profiles Live Art's resourcefulness and inventiveness; its capacity to engage with complexity and risk, to offer alternative approaches to art making, activism and community building, to provide safe spaces for dangerous ideas; its critical relationship with higher education; and the key role that artists and artist-led initiatives play in driving the sector.

Its findings and opportunities for action also address the challenges facing the sector, and challenges within the sector in relation to racial equity, inclusion and representation, to issues of critical care and labour practices for artists and arts workers, to the need to engage with publics and places beyond metropolitan centres, and to Live Art's responsibilities to our communities and our environments.

Our intention is that *Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* will act as a useful and generative tool for those working with Live Art, and for policymakers, funding bodies, programmers and producers, educators, and everyone concerned with what innovative, experimental and experiential artistic practices can be and do. *Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* also presents one of the first opportunities for the cultural sector to look at the impact of the seismic events of 2020 and to consider the strategies and fresh thinking we need to respond to this cultural moment in order to move forward and create the futures we all want to see.

Live Art Development Agency and Live Art UK  
June 2021





Noëmi Lakmaier, *We are for you because we are against them*, Fierce Festival.  
Photo by Manuel Vason, 2017.



Ron Athey, *Incorruptible Flesh: Messianic Remains*, ]performance s p a c e[.  
Photo by Manuel Vason, 2014.

# Executive Summary

***At its best, Live Art is rigorous, irreverent, brave and kind of... exhilarating! Because it's space. Space on the margins to imagine different ways of living, and to truly create and exercise agency... where life and art are inseparable and shape one another.<sup>1</sup>***

– Selina Thompson, artist

*Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* is the first ever UK-wide research project into the Live Art sector, funded by Arts Council England and commissioned by the Live Art Development Agency in partnership with Live Art UK. It maps the Live Art sector, its impact and influence in order to identify the best way to support artists and organisations who work with a range of ambitious experimental, process-based, socially-engaged and participatory practices.

The following questions were agreed with Arts Council England at the outset of the research project and underpin our approach to researching sectoral activity:

- What is the contribution of Live Art to Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity (and of diversity to Live Art)?<sup>2</sup>
- What is the influence of Live Art on talent development, challenging practices, and approaches to risk?
- What is the impact of Live Art on mainstream, popular, national and/or institutional cultures?

<sup>1</sup> Selina Thompson, in Live Art UK (eds), *It's Time: how Live Art is taking on the world from the front line to the bottom line*, London: Live Art UK, 2019, back cover.  
<sup>2</sup> Arts Council England launched the Creative Case for Diversity in 2011. A nationwide initiative, it seeks to reinforce the importance of diversity in art, arts leadership and audiences by growing opportunities for minority and marginalised people so that the arts better reflect contemporary society, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity>



The project's research activities took place between September 2019 and May 2021 and its methodologies included:

- a survey of individuals
- an organisational questionnaire
- consultations including regional and national focus groups, research roundtables and dialogues
- artist perspectives and audience development case studies
- desk research

This report is intended to be read by artists, organisations, funders, policymakers and researchers, in the Live Art sector and beyond, with an interest in the ongoing development of innovative artistic practices, and the celebration of everyone's creativity and diversity – all key components of Arts Council England's 'Let's Create, Our Strategy 2020–2030'.<sup>3</sup> The report provides findings and opportunities for action that support and inform delivery of a range of UK arts and culture funding frameworks, including Arts Council England's Let's Create.<sup>4</sup> It addresses how sectoral support for Live Art practices in the UK contributes to strategic areas and priorities, including ambition and quality, inclusion and relevance, creativity, and new approaches to collaboration and participation.

Through our research, we have found that the UK Live Art sector comprises a diverse ecology of projects, groups, initiatives and organisations of different scales, sizes and remits, each making a significant contribution to the development of Live Art practices. Live Art practices are wide-ranging and projects are often ambitious, offering opportunities for audiences to encounter work in a variety of spaces: from galleries and theatre spaces to clubs and community centres. The Live Art sector supports practices that experiment with audiences, develop and enrich civic relationships, and feed into how arts organisations work with young people.

People working in the Live Art sector are extremely skilled, resourceful and committed. However, our research reveals that whilst practitioners working within the Live Art sector are adaptable and resilient, a culture of underpaid work takes its toll on practitioners, financially and emotionally. Over the last twenty years, the Live Art sector has cultivated a productive relationship with higher education, in terms of visibility and cross subsidy, which now faces increasing resourcing challenges.

<sup>3</sup> Arts Council England, 'Let's Create, Our Strategy 2020–2030', 2020, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

<sup>4</sup> Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 'Inspire, Connect, Lead: A five-year strategic framework for developing the arts 2019-2024', 2020, <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Draft-5-year-Strategic-Framework-for-Developing-the-Arts-2019-2024.pdf>; Arts Council of Wales // Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru, 'Inspire: Our strategy for Creativity and the Arts in Wales', 2019, [https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2019-06/Inspire\\_0.pdf](https://arts.wales/sites/default/files/2019-06/Inspire_0.pdf); Creative Scotland, 'Unlocking Potential, Embracing Ambition - a shared plan for the arts, screen and creative industries, 2014-2024', 2014, [https://www.creativescotland.com/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/25500/Creative-Scotland-10-Year-Plan-2014-2024-v1-2.pdf](https://www.creativescotland.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/25500/Creative-Scotland-10-Year-Plan-2014-2024-v1-2.pdf)

Our research has found that the Live Art sector nurtures a broad spectrum of ideas of practices, and that it promotes cross-pollination and collaboration between itself and other sectors. The UK Live Art sector has regional, national and international reach. It is well placed to make important contributions to new aspects of participatory and collaborative practice. Live Art promotes ongoing experimentation into the complex relationship between audience and live encounter, offering other sectors and creative disciplines innovative ways of understanding how publics experience art and creativity.

The UK Live Art sector supports artistic practices that impact and influence wider culture and society. Although Live Art encompasses a wide range of approaches, the term Live Art is not always used by practitioners and publics. Live Art tests and challenges limits across artforms, cultural conventions and social practices which correspond with the sector's imagining of itself as a space of cultural resistance, manoeuvring between grassroots activity and visibility in mainstream spaces. The sector has demonstrated its capacity to thoughtfully and actively respond to the most serious challenges facing contemporary society brought about by the climate crisis and structural inequalities. The Live Art sector is diverse, yet like all areas in the arts and cultural sector, it could do more to nurture diverse talent and leadership.

Supporting Live Art can – and does – benefit artists and artform development. Investment in the celebration of everyone's creativity and the development of creative and critical thinking would be well supported through the Live Art sector.



# 01

## Methods and Context

**Section One:** Positionality Statement

**Section Two:** Brief and Methodology

**Section Three:** Addressing the Term 'Live Art'



Nicholas Tee, *The Rising*, ]performance s p a c e[. Photo by Manuel Vason, 2018.

# Section One: Positionality Statement

We open this report with a statement on our positionality as researchers and project managers of this research on the Live Art sector in the UK, in order to offer our intentions, motivations and transparency about how we are, as a research collective, intertwined in the workings of the sector itself.

## Our research collective

Dr Cecilia Wee (co-lead of the research collective) is an independent curator, educator and researcher based in London. She is a second generation South East Asian cis-gendered woman.

Dr Elyssa Livergant (co-lead of the research collective) is an artist, researcher and educator based in London. She is a white, queer, cis-gendered woman from a middle class background.

Chinasa Vivian Ezugha is a Nigerian-born artist, researcher and cultural worker based in Hampshire.

Dr Johanna Linsley is an artist, researcher and lecturer based in Dundee, Scotland. She is a white, queer, cis-gendered woman. She is a citizen of the United States and in full-time employment in higher education.

Dr Tarek Virani is Associate Professor of Creative Industries at UWE Bristol based in South West England.

Dr Tim Jeeves is an independent artist and city councillor based in Liverpool. He is disabled, white, British, cis-gendered and male.

The research collective is primarily composed of people who have worked in the Live Art sector in roles such as researchers, teachers, artists, curators, board members and arts workers. Between us, our professional engagement with the sector can be traced back to 2004. We acknowledge and recognise how our involvement with the sector, both in our individual and collective work, has had and may continue to have potential for reproducing racial, class, ableist and gender inequities that exist in both the Live Art sector, the arts sector and society more broadly. In an effort to be as inclusive and representative as possible, we have worked with a diversity of practitioners, including a research advisory group

convened by Live Art Development Agency (LADA), who represent a spectrum of identities.

Our approach to this report, which brings our perspectives of working within and outside Live Art in different locations across the UK, is to create a rigorous, critical and robust research base that maps the impact and influence of Live Art, both problematising and celebrating its complexity, diversity, and achievements, and generating fresh thinking about potential opportunities for the sector. We also acknowledge that Live Art is embedded in the current social, economic and political contexts of its time and therefore is subject to the material and ideological dynamics that produce injustice and domination.

Informed by our various experiences of diversity and representation, artist development and experimentation, and the effects of Live Art on the wider cultural sector, we have approached this review with curiosity, criticality and hope for the future. We are motivated by a spirit of intellectual and creative enquiry and an ethical commitment to social justice. We are committed to producing research with social and cultural impact, particularly for: artists; arts agencies and organisations; policymakers; and individuals from marginalised communities. Moreover, by creating spaces to explore relationships between grassroots practices and institutional powers, our approach is reflective of dialogic ways of working that are fundamental to Live Art.

This is a collective report, but Dr Elyssa Livergant and Dr Cecilia Wee have been leading the research, both in terms of steering the process and direction, as well as spending more time and labour on its production.

When we began this report in Autumn 2019, the arts and cultural sector was already experiencing a great deal of pressure from the fallouts of a long period of austerity.<sup>5</sup> In the interim period, COVID-19, Brexit,<sup>6</sup> and renewed calls for racial justice by the Black Lives Matter movement have intensified the multiple challenges facing Live Art and the wider arts and cultural sector. Even now, at the time of writing, the sector faces tremendous uncertainty, with staff from organisations on furlough and an ongoing lack of government financial support programmes for freelancers (including artists) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances are layered upon the already precarious nature of independent labour within the Live Art sector.

Given the significance of these challenges and the complexity of these issues, we advocate not only for sustaining the practice of Live Art, but moreover, we advocate for sustaining the welfare and nurturing of people who are currently involved in the UK's Live Art sector, as well as those who may find a home in Live Art in the future.

<sup>5</sup> Since 2010, the UK government has undertaken widespread and deep cuts in most areas of public funding. For an overview of the negative impacts of these cuts and rising inequalities on the health of people in England, see Michael Marmot, Jessica Allen, Tammy Boyce, Peter Goldblatt, Joana Morrison, 'Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 years on', London: Institute of Health Equity, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Britain's exit from the European Union, hereafter referred to as Brexit throughout the report.



# Section Two: Brief and Methodology

## Brief and research questions

This research project and subsequent report is the first of its kind to map the Live Art sector in the UK. It has arisen from lobbying activities undertaken by the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) and the 30 organisations across the nations making up the Live Art UK network over the last decade, including: In 2010, LADA and Live Art UK instigated *In Time*, a series of case studies about Live Art's diversity and impact.<sup>7</sup> LADA, with the support of Live Art UK, also initiated the first ever cross-department meeting at Arts Council England about Live Art and the contributions it makes to culture and to artform development.<sup>8</sup> In 2018, the Live Art UK network began discussions with Arts Council England to request a nationwide sector review. This continuing dialogue was also informed by the 2019 publication of *It's Time* by LADA, Wunderbar and partner organisations, which presented a series of contextualising essays outlining both the robustness of performance-based art in the UK and the increasingly fragile conditions that the sector and artists working with Live Art were facing.<sup>9</sup>

In Spring 2019, Arts Council England funded LADA, working in partnership with Live Art UK, to undertake research into the current conditions, opportunities, challenges and impacts of the Live Art sector in England. LADA decided to commission independent consultants to undertake this work and to expand the remit of the project to the UK. Following a call for proposals from LADA, our research collective was awarded the commission to undertake this research, which was to run from September 2019 until June 2020. Following a pause in activities in response to COVID-19, the review period was extended until June 2021.

We were tasked with producing a report that would be relevant to a range of audiences that include the Live Art sector, funders, local and national government, and higher education and wider sectors. Further, part of the brief for this project was to contribute to future directions and developments in policy and provision for the sector, as well as identifying opportunities for action in relation to future funding and economic models for Live Art.

<sup>7</sup> Live Art Development Agency (eds), *In Time: A Collection of Live Art Case Studies*, London: Live Art Development Agency in collaboration with Live Art UK, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Live Art UK archive, held by Live Art Development Agency, Record of meeting Live Art UK / Arts Council England - Interdisciplinary Practice, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Live Art UK (eds), *It's Time*.

*This research was designed to address the following objectives:*

- Map the UK Live Art sector to offer a better understanding of the people, sites, practices, resources, conditions, networks and relationships that make up the sector.
- Reflect on this mapping in connection with current cultural, economic and political struggles to better understand the sector's key strengths and examine future challenges.
- Demonstrate and evidence the sector's complexity, diversity and achievements in relation to, among other things, Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity, impact on mainstream and popular culture, and artistic risk and innovative models for artist development.
- Identify a series of proposals that could be further developed with and taken forward by the arts councils of the four nations of the UK, other funders and stakeholders working in the Live Art sector to support a sustainable and just future.



Jazmine Krokback, *Emergency, hÅb*. Photo by Tamsin Drury, 2019.



## Principles and ethics of our approach

Our collaborative, action-research-oriented approach as a research collective situated across the UK aims to collect and represent as full a scope of practices and geographies as possible within the confines of the project. We have chosen an action-research approach, which is participatory and historicised, because it foregrounds working in partnership and collaboration with communities at the core of research to collectively define and co-produce change.<sup>10</sup>



Lois Weaver, *Long Table on Feminism*, Restock Rethink Reflect 3: Live Art and Feminism, Live Art Development Agency. Photo by Alex Eisenberg, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> For a fuller account of the principles of an action-research approach please see Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, London: Sage, 2001, p.1: 'action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing...It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities'.

## Scope of the research

This study was designed to map the Live Art sector in the UK, and involved participation of artists, independent arts workers, educators, organisations, funders and arts councils working across all regions and nations of the UK. This process and the ongoing pressures on the arts and cultural sector since the COVID-19 pandemic threw into relief some challenges for the scope of our research. The relative instability of the term 'Live Art', and its limited currency for artists, arts workers, organisations and funders was noticeable, especially in Northern Ireland and Wales. This contributed to the lack of uptake for focus group participation and responses to our 2019 survey of individuals in these nations. We addressed this by drawing on broader knowledge of our research advisory group and Live Art UK members, who put us in direct contact with artists and organisations in Northern Ireland and Wales. We also drew on desk research, themed roundtable discussions on higher education, and individual consultations with artists, educators and organisations in Wales and Northern Ireland.

However, there is more work to be done. As noted in Part 1, Section Three: Addressing the Term, we anticipate two upcoming studies will offer helpful insights and add to a further detailed mapping of the sector: Stephen Greer's 'Live Art in Scotland', an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project investigating the history of Live Art in Scotland that launched in 2021, and the upcoming PhD project 'Performance Art in Northern Ireland' beginning in September 2021, undertaken by artist and Bbeyond co-founder Brian Patterson at Ulster University. A comparison of experience and participation in activity across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland<sup>11</sup> in relation to specific social, economic and political contexts could enable a further nuanced analysis of the unique characteristics of the UK Live Art sector.

As this is the first type of research on the Live Art sector in the UK to include the collection of quantitative data, there are gaps in our report. We draw on publicly accessible data from UK arts councils and have been granted access to specific data about Live Art and live performance project funding and National Portfolio Organisations from Arts Council England. The scope of our study was limited in the degree of detail it could collect, for example on working conditions and pay. Equally, we have not provided an intersectional analysis of the sector's workforce. We have addressed these limits through drawing on workforce analysis from relevant and related artform sectors. However, a piece of future research focused specifically on a Live Art sector workforce review would certainly help to address these gaps.

<sup>11</sup> We note the relevance of findings about Live Art in the Republic of Ireland to an understanding of the UK Live Art sector.





Dickie Beau, *LOST in TRANS*, IBT17. Photo by Paul Blakemore, 2017.



# Overview of activities

## Research phases

This project had two phases:

Phase 1: Mapping the Live Art sector, including focus groups and a survey for individuals in the sector (October 2019–March 2020).

Phase 2: Research roundtables, dialogue sessions, an organisational questionnaire and reappraisals of Phase 1 findings in the context of emerging research in the wake of COVID-19, Brexit and the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement (October 2020–March 2021).

Throughout both phases we have worked in dialogue with LADA, Live Art UK and Arts Council England. Our research has been supported by an advisory group organised by LADA and composed of artists, organisations, programmers, academics and funders working with Live Art across the UK. A list of research advisory group members can be found in Appendix I.

## 2019 survey of individuals

The 2019 survey of individuals working in the Live Art sector included topics such as: artform and discipline; collaborations; audience; Live Art as a category of practice and sector; engagement with networks, platforms and support systems; funding and resources; and demographic details. The survey comprised forty-five questions, enabling us to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. It provides a unique snapshot of the UK's Live Art sector between November 2019 and February 2020.

Survey themes were identified by the research collective, with support from the Artist Perspectives roundtable in October 2019. The survey was delivered online via Survey Monkey and shared through Live Art UK, its partner organisations' mailing lists and via social media. We provided access support for respondents who needed this to complete the survey. The survey was anonymous in that respondents were not asked to identify themselves or their affiliations. Where such personally identifying information was provided, we have removed this from inclusion in this report.

The 2019 survey of individuals was created to capture insights from people working across the sector – both independent workers and those employed in venues and institutions – about their work with Live Art, the economic conditions of the sector and what they value about Live Art. We received 258 responses to the survey, an extremely robust response rate which provided a statistically

significant sample of data from which to work.<sup>12</sup> There is no sturdy estimate of the size of the Live Art workforce in the UK. Therefore, data from our survey is presented based on unweighted (raw) data and is not compared to a total number of individuals in the sector.

Data from the 2019 survey of individuals can be found on the project website in Appendix IV.<sup>13</sup>



Sibylle Peters, *KAPUTT: The Academy of Destruction*, Tate Modern, Live Art Development Agency. Photo by Katherina Duve, 2018.

## 2021 organisational questionnaire

An organisational questionnaire, planned for Spring 2020, was postponed when the research project was paused in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new organisational questionnaire was designed in January–February 2021 to gather details and experiences of organisations and groups working in Live Art in the UK. It addressed conditions and concerns of organisations pre- and post- March 2020. It was targeted at Live Art UK members, as well as groups, projects and organisations connected to the research project's advisory group involved in making, producing, disseminating, and supporting Live Art.

<sup>12</sup> For studies similar to this, with a 95% confidence level, population proportion of 50%, and 7% margin of error, the required sample size is  $n = 196$ . This is calculated using the formula  $S = Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p) / M^2$ . See Douglas Lind, William Marchal, and Samuel Wathen, *Basic Statistics for Business and Economics, Fifth Edition*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Free text answers are not included as part of Appendix IV due to privacy concerns.



The respondents to the questionnaire encompass organisations of all scales and types, from grassroots collectives to publicly-funded festivals and venues. The 2021 organisational questionnaire consisted of thirty-three questions, focused on issues of organisational infrastructure such as finance, wage, and employee information. The survey also included ten questions which invited free text reflections on the impacts of COVID-19, Brexit, and organisational responses to recent calls for anti-racist action.

The 2021 organisational questionnaire was open for responses online from March to May 2021. We received twenty-two responses to this questionnaire; the rich qualitative data has informed our understanding of how Live Art infrastructure operates and points to how it is adapting to the current moment.

According to the participation agreement made with respondents, the research collective has treated the data gathered confidentially. Due to the sample size and the nature of the responses to the 2021 organisational questionnaire, respondents may be identifiable and so the data is not shared in full as an Appendix to this report.

### **Case studies: audience development**

Case studies of three projects by artists and organisations working with Live Art practitioners were compiled, in collaboration with Live Art UK organisations, to better understand how the Live Art sector supports audience development. Case studies drew on projects taking place in Yorkshire, London, and the South East as examples of collaboration with professionals across different sectors, performances for older people and young people's programmes. Each project case study describes target audience and numbers, the audience recruitment process and further activities to maintain engagement.

### **Consultations: regional and national focus groups**

Regional and national focus groups were key to collecting views on successes, opportunities, and the state of the sector from organisations and groups receiving core funding from the arts councils, non-funded organisations, artists, funders, and other stakeholders. Focus group sessions lasted three hours and were attended by a maximum number of twelve participants. Seventy-three people participated in our regional and national focus group sessions. Each group was facilitated by members of the research collective and participants were invited to continue their dialogues beyond the sessions. Focus groups were centred on the South East (Folkestone), Midlands (Birmingham), the North (Manchester and Newcastle), Scotland (Glasgow), the South West (Bristol), and London between October 2019-February 2020. Whilst focus groups included participants from different locations within the regions, we note a concentration of voices from the cities in which focus groups took place.

### **Consultations: themed roundtables and dialogues**

The research utilised ongoing roundtable discussions and dialogues to further garner a picture of the Live Art Sector in the UK. Roundtable research discussions centred on the following themes and were attended by relevant stakeholders throughout the UK: Artist Perspectives (September 2019); Diversity (February 2021); Higher Education (February 2021); and Arts Councils (June 2020 and April 2021).<sup>14</sup> Fifty people participated in our themed roundtables.

In addition, formal and informal dialogues took place throughout the research period and engaged the research collective, cultural workers, artists, funders and programmers.

Throughout our primary research activities, we have used Chatham House rules.<sup>15</sup> This means knowledge that is produced can be shared outside 'the room', but the words are not to be attributed to an individual. Therefore, throughout our report we have refrained from attributing information from these research activities to individuals. This is intended to respect privacy within a relatively small arts sector.

A list of individuals consulted in regional and national focus groups, themed roundtables and dialogues can be found in Appendix III.

### **Perspectives**

A series of nineteen 'perspectives' from artists, organisations and projects working with Live Art feature in Part 3 of this report. Each perspective serves as a standalone mini section, offering another snapshot of what Live Art is and how it works, from the viewpoint of practitioners and organisations in the sector. The premise for the perspectives developed out of conversations within the research collective about the relationship between arts policy, especially Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy, and the representation of Live Art practices within this research.

The perspectives were selected to illustrate the diversity of practices and practitioners working with Live Art across the regions and nations of the UK, and in relation to geography, class, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age and experience. Practitioners were asked to respond to a set of questions exploring how Live Art as a strategy informs their work and approach to audiences, how the sector has supported them, and the relationship between Live Art and social change. Each response has been edited for length and clarity.

<sup>14</sup> This involved representatives from Arts Council England, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Northern Ireland. Representatives from Arts Council Wales were due to attend but unfortunately were not able to do so on the day.

<sup>15</sup> More information can be found at 'About Us', Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>

The set of perspectives are preceded by a framing introduction which further outlines the approach we have taken.

### Desk research

We have drawn on a wide range of secondary research materials such as journal articles, research publications, statistical reports, qualitative and quantitative research reports, websites, and online databases. This secondary research has focused on UK sources, including research produced by UK government departments and the Office for National Statistics; arts and culture sector reports by organisations such as Creative & Cultural Skills, the Creative Industries Federation, the Audience Agency and arts councils across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In addition, as this research is the first of its kind for the Live Art sector, we draw on existing arts sector specific reports and data about the visual arts, dance and theatre sectors to provide context for our findings and data sets. Data from the visual arts, dance and theatre sector is valuable for our research as those working with/in Live Art often also identify with visual arts, dance and/or theatre.<sup>16</sup> This report is also informed by a bibliography of writing by artists, critical thinkers and researchers about Live Art, which has especially flourished in the last twenty years.

### Research Outputs

This report is available online and distributed as a print publication. The report is accompanied by commissioned work from a number of artists and writers to create a body of new texts and artworks that respond to, contextualise and complement the research project's findings and opportunities for action. The commissioned artists are: Aaron Williamson, Anne Bean, Alexandrina Hemsley, and Jamal Gerald. The commissioned writers are: Annie Jael Kwan, Phoebe Patey Ferguson and An\*dre Neely, and Tim Etchells.

# Section Three: Addressing the Term 'Live Art'

Live Art, as a term and a sector, has been the subject of much celebration, critical discussion and debate in the UK over the last thirty years. Since its inception in 1999, the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) has been important in advocating for the use of the term to describe a range of experimental aesthetic practices that sit across a number of disciplines including visual art, dance, theatre, writing and sound art. With the support of LADA's advocacy, first in London and then across England, the UK and internationally, Live Art has developed into a central and, to some degree, centralising term. Rather than a descriptor for a particular artform, LADA employs the term Live Art to describe 'a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts... [Live Art is] a way of thinking about what art is, what it can do, and where and how it can be experienced... always explor[ing] the possibilities of the live event and the ways we can experience it'.<sup>17</sup>

As an artistic category, Live Art has tended to not only embrace practices that are in between traditions but also bodies, identities and cultural values that challenge social and cultural norms and perceptions. Theatre and performance scholar Theron Schmidt's 2019 edited collection *Agency – A Partial History of Live Art*, offers a range of perspectives on Live Art to mark the twentieth anniversary of the creation of LADA. As Schmidt points out in his book's introduction, the term Live Art is not only relatively new, it also stands in for a diversity of practices and approaches:

As a relatively recent way of framing certain artistic practices within the UK contemporary art sector, Live Art is intentionally capacious in the range of practices it can include: body art, performances for the stage, cabaret, interactions in public, site-responsive work, invisible interventions, overtly political actions and many other ways of working. From its early usages as a term, its very breadth and inclusivity has been held up as a strength.<sup>18</sup>

However, artists, practitioners and organisations who work with Live Art often resist set definitions of the term. It is a contested category, in part, because the practices it seeks to contain cut across and challenge disciplinary boundaries.

<sup>17</sup> Live Art Development Agency, 'What is Live Art?', <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about-lada/what-is-live-art>

<sup>18</sup> Theron Schmidt (ed.), *Agency – A Partial History of Live Art*, Bristol: Intellect, 2019, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> This is discussed further in Part 2 of our report.



As such, Live Art, as a term and category of practice, can often obscure varied disciplinary, historical and institutional genealogies. Indeed, we noted that participants in our research use terms like performance art, contemporary performance, experimental theatre, and time-based media alongside or instead of Live Art. For example, in Wales and Northern Ireland, artists, institutions and funders recognise the term Live Art, but are more likely to use the term and category of performance art when describing experimental performance-based work.

There already exists a range of excellent academic sources offering accounts of the development of the term and category Live Art, and the ways it has been deployed historically by artists, institutions and policymakers.<sup>19</sup> Dominic Johnson's edited collection *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK*, and Maria Chatzichristodoulou's edited collection *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity*, are rich resources exploring the term, category and practices of Live Art. The Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project, 'What's Welsh for Performance?' led by theatre and performance scholar Heike Roms, offers an invaluable comprehensive account and archive of the emergence of performance art in Wales in the later twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> Andre Stitt's forthcoming chapter on Welsh performance art between 2008 and 2018 is an important complementary resource for researchers interested in a more recent history of experimental performance activity in Wales.<sup>21</sup> Áine Phillips' *Performance Art in Ireland: A History* is an essential edited collection on performance art in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland that seeks to contribute to the evolution of Live Art in Ireland and beyond.<sup>22</sup> At the time of writing, two important pieces of research into non-mainstream experimental performance-based practices have recently got underway: 'Live Art in Scotland' and 'Performance Art in Northern Ireland', as mentioned in Section Two: Brief and Methodology. We look forward to these pieces of research which will no doubt further the work of mapping the impact and influence of Live Art in the UK.

The breadth of research into the histories of contemporary experimental performance-based practice is indicative of the increasing impact and influence of Live Art practices in the UK and beyond. LADA's collaboration with Tate Modern on the 2003 programme Live Culture, featuring a range of non-mainstream experimental practices and approaches that centred on the body,

liveness and the encounter between audience and action, was a precursor for the inclusion and presentation of artists working with Live Art that are now visible in mainstream UK cultural institutions such as the Tanks at Tate Modern, the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, the Royal Court Theatre and Manchester International Festival. The European Live Art Archive, coordinated by Girona University in Spain, and the prestigious Live Art prize presented annually at the ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival, Kuopio, Finland since 2014, along with opportunities to undertake Masters degrees in Live Art in both London and Helsinki, are further indicators that Live Art as a term and category of practice has international currency in institutional cultural contexts.

While we recognise that the catch-all term Live Art is problematic, we use it in this report to describe a sector of activity comprising, among other things, artists, organisations, spaces, policies, resources and audiences. Our approach to sectoral activity is indebted to sociologist Howard Becker's examination of the complex networks of co-operative activity and conventions that help produce an 'Art World'.<sup>23</sup> As such, while the focus of this report centres on a period of sectoral activity between September 2019 and May 2021, we draw throughout on earlier sectoral activity that helps bring the report period into focus. The report presents an indicative rather than definitive view of the sector and how it operates. It is intended to be read by artists, organisations, funders, policymakers and researchers in the Live Art sector and beyond with an interest in creativity, participation, social justice and diverse cultural practices – all key components of UK arts and culture funding strategies. It seeks to help generate new ways of thinking about how the sector works and enable further work, partnerships and research.

- 19 A few examples of useful scholarship into the term Live Art in relation to art history, cultural policy, institutional and artist-led activities include: Adrian Heathfield (ed.), *Live: Art and Performance*, New York: Routledge, 2004; Heathfield and Amelia Jones (eds), *Perform, Repeat and Record: Live Art in History*, Bristol: Intellect, 2012; Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein (eds), *Histories and Practices of Live Art*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; Dominic Johnson (ed.), *Critical Live Art: Contemporary Histories of Performance in the UK*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016 and Maria Chatzichristodoulou (ed.), *Live Art in the UK: Contemporary Performances of Precarity*, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2020.
- 20 Heike Roms (project director), 'What's Welsh for Performance? Beth yw "performance" yn Gymraeg?', 2011, <http://www.performance-wales.org>
- 21 Andre Stitt 'Cymru/Wales: nation states, altered states, and republics 1998–2018// Cymru: Tri chyflwr byd: gwladwriaeth, gwewyr a gweriniaeth 1998–2018', *Art Action 2008–2018*, Ottawa: Les Éditions Intervention, forthcoming 2021.
- 22 Áine Phillips (ed.), *Performance Art in Ireland: A History*, Bristol: Intellect, 2015.

- 23 Howard Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

# 02

## Snapshot of the Sector



Muneera Pilgrim, Creative Exchange Lab 2019, IBT19 Summit. Photo by Manuel Vason, 2019.

**Section One:** Key Structures

**Section Two:** Creating and Making

**Section Three:** Higher Education

**Section Four:** Audiences and Influence

**Section Five:** Demographics

**Section Six:** Diversity

**Section Seven:** Sustaining and Organising

**Section Eight:** Post-March 2020 Conditions



## Overview

Part 2 forms the substantial component of this report on the UK Live Art sector, synthesising data from our surveys, case studies, focus groups, themed roundtables and dialogues, alongside desk research, to offer a snapshot of the sector. We begin in Section One with Key Structures, outlining the different types of infrastructure that support Live Art practices in the UK. Section Two on Creating and Making, examines how Live Art practitioners contextualise their work, and professional development journeys. In Section Three on Higher Education, we explore the close and mutually beneficial relationship between Live Art practices and higher education. Section Four on Audiences and Influence provides data, findings and case studies to demonstrate how the sector supports the distribution and visibility of Live Art practices. In Section Five on Demographics, we present snapshot data to illustrate who works in the UK Live Art sector. This is followed by Section Six on Diversity, where the focus is on Live Art's work with disability, race and ethnicity, including discussion of the major Live Art UK project, Diverse Actions (2017–20). Section Seven on Sustaining and Organising presents survey data to indicate trends in livelihoods and organisational operations within the sector. In Section Eight on Post-March 2020 Conditions, we reflect on the ongoing and expected impacts of COVID-19 and Brexit, and how the Live Art sector is responding to renewed calls to address racial inequalities.

# Section One: Key Structures

## A. Live Art Development Agency

The Live Art Development Agency (LADA) is a centre for Live Art established in 1999, and a foundational resource for the advocacy, development and promotion of Live Art practices in the UK and internationally. Based at the Garrett Centre in Tower Hamlets, London since 2017, LADA champions experimental, interdisciplinary, challenging and unpredictable artistic processes. It works through curatorial projects, programmes, events, publications and a wide range of research resources and networks, including housing a comprehensive open-access archive of Live Art resources.

LADA's achievements include major collaborations in publishing such as working with Intellect Books on *Intellect Live*, a series of publications about artists who work with Live Art (2013–20); artistic programming, including a collaboration with Tate Modern on Live Culture, a groundbreaking programme of performances, events and discussions by international practitioners (2003); professional development, including research bursaries for artists and the flagship DIY programme of professional development by artists for artists (2002–ongoing); artform development, for example Restock, Rethink, Reflect, a series of initiatives mapping and marking representations of identity politics in Live Art (2006–ongoing); and interventions in higher education, notably working with Queen Mary, University of London, to deliver and develop one of the first ever Masters-level programmes in Live Art (2018–ongoing).

At time of writing, LADA is undertaking a transformational process of organisational change and leadership succession, with co-founder Lois Keidan accelerating her process of stepping aside as Director to make space for new leadership in response to broader calls for racial equity within the arts and cultural sector.

## B. Live Art UK

Live Art UK is a membership network of promoters, facilitators and venues, concerned with the development and promotion of Live Art domestically and internationally. In 2019–20, Live Art UK had thirty members, reflecting representation across England's regions and all nations except Northern Ireland. The network has grown substantially since its inception in 2003, more than tripling its membership. For a full list of membership please see Appendix II.

The Live Art UK network reflects the heterogeneous nature of infrastructure for Live Art in the UK. It comprises members of different scale, size and remit, including unincorporated artist-led initiatives, through to venues and funded organisations offering advocacy and artist development, internationally renowned festivals and key UK infrastructural organisations. Members of Live Art UK benefit from the 'network effect' of visibility, knowledge and resource sharing, and collaboratively developed initiatives.

Live Art UK is currently convened and administered by LADA. Membership is by invitation and proposal by existing members, based on the centrality of Live Art to a (potential) member's purpose and activity, and their capacity to contribute to advocacy of the Live Art sector. At time of writing, network structure and operations are being reviewed.

The network cultivates opportunities for advocacy, including research into touring and writing about the artform, drawing out productive relationships between mainstream and experimental practices. It also functions as a conduit for lobbying on a sector-wide and policy level, undertaking advocacy on behalf of artists and organisations with an interest in Live Art. Our 2019 survey of individuals working with/in Live Art confirmed that Live Art UK is a productive resource for some individuals working in the sector, with 59% of respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing that it is important to have their work recognised by the network (Q15, SurvInd).

The Live Art UK network works together to identify key issues and opportunities within the sector and, where there is shared interest and motivation, the network develops collaborative projects to advance sectoral knowledge and experience. These have included gatherings with invited speakers, podcasts, symposia and publications on subjects including audiences and touring.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For example, Mary Paterson and Theron Schmidt (eds), *Getting It Out There - The future of touring and distribution for contemporary theatre and Live Art*, Lancaster: Live at LICA and Live Art UK, 2012, exploring the future of touring for contemporary theatre and Live Art, <http://liveartuk.org/activities/getting-it-out-there>; Yvonne Carmichael and Amelia Crouch (eds), *Unruly Utterances: Participation, Criticality and Compass Festival 2014*, Leeds: Compass Live Art and Live Art UK, 2014; and Live Art UK (eds), *It's Time*.

Live Art UK's project *Diverse Actions* (2017–20), was an example of a significant Live Art UK sectoral development initiative. *Diverse Actions* championed 'culturally diverse'<sup>25</sup> ambition, excellence and talent in Live Art, reflecting the sector's concern about the historic lack of racial equity in relation to artist and leadership development. Funded by a £500,000 Arts Council England Ambition for Excellence Grant in 2017 with cash and in-kind contributions from Live Art UK members, this was the largest investment in the Live Art UK network since its beginnings. While the sector reported that there were many positive outcomes from this project, *Diverse Actions* has also raised a number of issues and challenges which are discussed later in Part 2, Section Six, entitled Diversity.



Ginny Lemon, Home Live Art. Photo by Georgina Cooke, 2018.

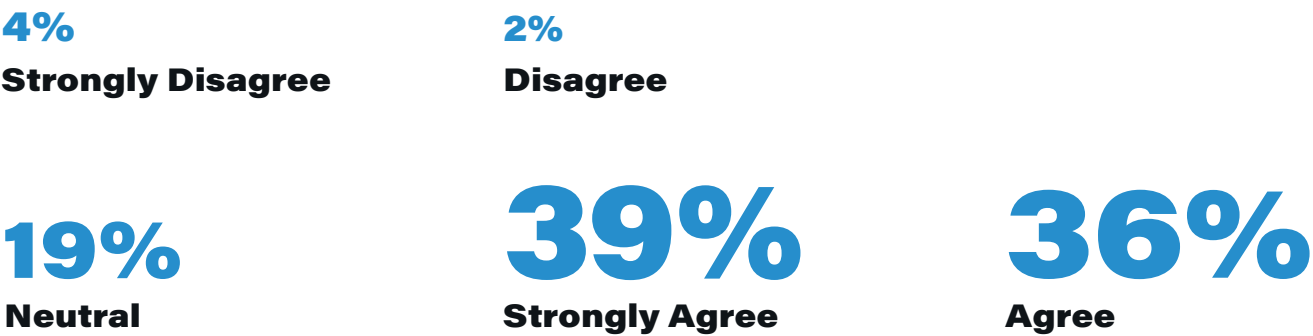
<sup>25</sup> 'Culturally diverse' is the historic term used by Arts Council England as part of the Ambition for Excellence funding programme, which funded the *Diverse Actions* project. The term was used when referring to individuals from Black, Asian Minority Ethnic, ethnically diverse, or Global Ethnic Majority backgrounds. As recommended by Inc Arts, the terms 'Global Ethnic Majority backgrounds' and 'ethnically diverse backgrounds' will be prioritised throughout this report to refer to people of African or Caribbean heritage, South, East, and South East Asian heritage, and Middle East and North African heritage. Where the terms 'Black, Asian Minority Ethnic' (BAME) or 'Black, Minority Ethnic' (BME) are used in the text, this reflects historical use of terminology. See Inc Arts, '#BAMEOver – A statement for the UK', first published September 2020, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vQkg5lloeAqMjMF6VW-eIEtEUEgK3GLudW1meE2DILbJPZYiP0dO3Qwx6YVxBFxOh1KEp5swpok80/pub>



# C. Artist-led initiatives

Our research has identified the importance of artist-led initiatives to the sector, and not only in terms of their contribution to sectoral activity. Artist-led initiatives contribute to the way those working with Live Art often imagine their practices and process as anti-institutional. Artist-led initiatives across the regions and nations of the UK have made and continue to make an important contribution to the creation, development and support of practices, artists and arts workers in the Live Art sector. According to our 2019 survey of individuals, 75% of 225 responses either agree or strongly agree with the statement ‘Artist-led initiatives are important to my Live Art practice’ (Q20, SurvInd).

**Q20. Artist-led initiatives are important to my Live Art practice:**  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals  
225 Answered



In this research, we refer to ‘artist-led initiatives’ as self-organised and collective activity, which may be led by artists, independent producers, curators or other categories of practitioner working with Live Art. Although artist-led initiatives are self-organised and collective activities, these initiatives do not necessarily adopt co-operative organising structures or co-operative economic models, as we will see in Part 2, Section Seven, on Sustaining and Organising.

Artist-led initiatives are essential to driving the development of Live Art practice because they are informed by on-the-ground knowledge and the needs of their communities of practice. Artist-led initiatives have grown ways for artists to work outside the parameters given by funders and institutions, allowing for experimentation and the development of communities that, in many cases, foreground resistance to formal structures, administration associated with public subsidy and/or views of arts management as supplementary to creative practice. For instance, the artist-activist home-based initiative, Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home in Everton, developed in response to artists being appropriated by the 2008 European Capital of Culture in Liverpool.<sup>26</sup> Another example of an artist-led initiative is the artist-led community Residence, who joined forces with other artist-initiatives to create an important social performance space at the Brunswick Club for artists working in Bristol. Fox Irving’s research into class and navigating the art world led to the conception of the peer mentoring group Women Working Class, and the development of a range of resources for artists and producers in the sector and beyond.

At the same time, artist-run activities across the arts and cultural sector have often historically relied on wider economic and social contexts and policies for their appearance. For example, Thatcher’s Enterprise Allowance Scheme benefitted DIY cultural production<sup>27</sup> in 1980s Britain.<sup>28</sup>

In the UK Live Art sector, artist-run initiatives also frequently draw on knowledge, personnel or resources from more formal sectoral institutions and affiliations. For example, LADA manages and facilitates DIY, a programme of professional development projects by artists for artists – an important artist-centred initiative that has been running since 2002, working with (at time of writing) more than 20 partners across the UK. Similarly, BUZZCUT, an important artist-led initiative that began in Glasgow in 2012, has transitioned over recent years into a partnership with the major experimental festival Take Me Somewhere, including sharing staff and ‘backroom’ operational resources. Some artist-led initiatives, such as

26 The European Capitals of Culture programme is a year-long celebration of art and culture with designation and support from the European Union (EU). <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/culture-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-culture>

27 DIY stands for Do It Yourself, historically this refers to traditions of self-organised, unfunded forms of cultural production that sit outside of institutionalised cultural practices. Punk music culture is a pertinent example of DIY culture, see Paula Guerra and Pedro Quintela (eds), *Punk, Fanzines and DIY Cultures in a Global World*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

28 See Andy C. Pratt, ‘Urban Regeneration: from the Arts “Feel Good” Factor to the Cultural Economy. Case Study of Hoxton, London’, *Urban Studies*, 46/5&6 (May 2009), pp.1041–61.

Chisenhale Dance Space have, over time, developed to become key organisations and initiatives for the sector.

According to our research consultations, individuals and organisations working within the Live Art sector have been deeply impacted by the wider pressures of austerity and the rising costs of living in the UK, resulting in decreased capacities to sustain and undertake grassroots activity. As is evidenced throughout this report, artist-led initiatives often rely on unpaid or underpaid labour and informal sharing networks to create and deliver their activities.

Facing an accelerated professionalisation and simultaneous shrinking of resources for artist-led activities in the UK,<sup>29</sup> we note the emergence of a number of support networks led by practitioners working collectively and collaboratively with Live Art developing over recent years. For instance, Asia-Art-Activism is a network of artists, curators and practitioners focused on celebrating and sustaining marginalised artists' practices.

We note through our research consultations that artist-led initiatives, particularly in non-urban locations, are hyperlocal, in that they take place within specific localities. These are often undocumented outside those localities, yet play a role in the incubation and development of Live Art practices. Although it is beyond the scope of this project to document these, further research into non-urban artist-led initiatives could be of value to the sector.

29 See Susan Jones, 'Artists' Livelihoods: the Artists in Arts Policy Conundrum', Doctoral thesis (PhD), Manchester Metropolitan University, 2019, unpublished.

## D. Spaces and places

### ***What are the models for consuming Live Art? The focus on festivals means it is not accessible all year round.***

– Focus group participant, 2019

#### **Festivals**

Our research has identified festivals as a primary mechanism for the presentation of Live Art in the UK. Festivals can often provide flexible frames for the presentation of artworks that include non-traditional uses of space and time, like site-responsive, participatory and durational work. However, as noted above, the centrality of festivals to the UK Live Art sector is not without challenges for artist and audience development, particularly in areas of the UK where year-around infrastructural support for Live Art is limited.

Nevertheless, Live Art festivals such as In Between Time (South West), Fierce (Midlands), Compass (Yorkshire), SPILL (East of England), Catalyst Arts' FIX (Northern Ireland) and Forest Fringe's Edinburgh programme (2007-2017), illustrate that festivals are a robust focal point for audiences, reaching wider publics and connecting artists and organisations within a community of practice. Also, festivals like London International Festival of Theatre, Manchester International Festival, Brighton Festival and the London International Mime Festival are mainstream settings that play an important role in the commissioning and presentation of large-scale and international work.

Festivals are part of a nuanced ecology of local, regional and national Live Art organisations and initiatives across the UK, where partnerships in the form of co-commissioning, co-production, artist development and more informal support structures help sustain and feed into the presentation of work on a range of festival 'stages'.

Many venues that present Live Art have a wider arts programme and remit, therefore festivals enable focused activity on Live Art, providing key moments for practitioners and audiences to gather and experience work. In addition, festivals offer artists vital opportunities to profile their work, to see work by others, engage in dialogue and conversation sessions, as well as more informal networking activities including meeting organisations and promoters. Festivals such as Experimentica at Chapter, Cardiff and NOW festival at The Yard, London take place within larger art centres and theatre programmes respectively. Transform in Leeds, Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (GIFT) and Knotty in Folkestone are examples of festivals that are commissioning artists working with Live Art to work site-responsively, offering opportunities for audiences to experience Live Art practices that reimagine place. Using varied audience engagement activities in diverse settings, Live Art festivals contribute to creativity within their local communities.



## Clubs and corner shops

Through partnerships and collaborations, the Live Art sector enables advocacy, dialogue and resources for Live Art practitioners to work within various settings and with/in communities. From performances at queer clubs like VfD in East London to Bbeyond's interventions in public spaces in Belfast, to projects in community centres and extra-care facilities, Live Art has built a reputation for inhabiting heterogenous, non-traditional spaces.

Artists working with Live Art in non-traditional spaces have also pushed the boundaries of where participation in the arts might take place, making Live Art practices accessible across the UK. Joshua Sofaer's *Opera Helps* sends professional opera singers to private homes in response to individual audience members asking for help with personal problems. In *Woodland*, French & Mottershead bring audiences to the woods to connect with deep time and chemical and biological processes. *Cruising for Art*, created by Brian Lobel, asks audiences to use gay cruising codes to engage in intimate interactions with performers.

Working outside traditional arts and cultural spaces is partly out of necessity. As we have noted in Part 1, Section Three: Addressing the Term 'Live Art', Live Art practitioners often challenge social and cultural norms, which has not always been welcome or supported in mainstream arts and cultural spaces. Moreover, the varied forms and durations of Live Art practices often challenge curatorial approaches, working structures and technical resources, especially for spaces that are aligned to non-Live Art specific artistic disciplines and histories. This is further discussed in Part 2, Section Two: Creating and Making, and in relation to touring, Part 2, Section Four: Audiences and Influence.

## Arts and cultural institutions/spaces

We recognise from research conversations that dedicated space for the making and presentation of Live Art is an important intention of the sector. Historically, access to free and low-cost spaces has been more readily available, and even a large space like Shunt Vaults in London was a hub for encountering artists working with Live Art. Today, we see the impact that the multiple challenges posed by austerity and increasing property costs have had on securing dedicated spaces for the presentation of Live Art in the UK. Of the few notable spaces dedicated to Live Art, the majority of these are artist-led, including ]performance space[ in Folkestone and its sister space VSSL in London, and Centre for Live Art Yorkshire (CLAY) in Leeds.

Moreover, Live Art has occupied spaces outside dedicated Live Art contexts ranging from music festivals such as Latitude, to multi-artform festivals – like Glasgow International and Norfolk and Norwich Festival – main stages of theatres such as the Royal Court Theatre and public programmes at galleries and museums including Baltic, Victoria and Albert Museum and the De La Warr Pavilion. Our research consultations inform us that artists working with Live Art experience developmental benefits from working outside Live Art specific

contexts, learn from adjacent artistic disciplines, value exposure to different audiences, and can benefit from an expanded profile.

## Platforms

Our research conversations indicate that artists and practitioners value the function of platforms as an essential part of the Live Art sector's infrastructure. The term 'platform' is used in different ways across the sector, but usually offers artists and audiences the opportunity to experience short works by multiple artists as part of one event. Platforms can function in different ways: some can help an artist build a continued relationship with an organisation, whilst others are showcasing opportunities in their own rights. Home for Waifs and Strays in the Midlands and SPILL YER TEA in Liverpool offered artists informal, peer-centred opportunities to regularly try out new work and work in progress.

Other platforms are more formal and are structured as part of a facilitated developmental process, often feeding into an artist's wider professional and creative development journey. An example of this is the Starting Blocks Showcase at Camden People's Theatre in London, which is the culmination of a 10-week artist residency. Flying Solo at Contact in Manchester is unusual and therefore significant in providing a platform for solo practitioners to develop and present their work. Perhaps one of the most notable national platforms for Live Art is organised by SPILL and plays a key part in SPILL festival.

## The digital

Digital offers much opportunity for the development, sharing and presentation of Live Art practice. Digital platforms such as LADA's Live Online, are a vital part of the Live Art ecology in the UK, with their usage becoming inevitably more widespread, especially due to social distancing restrictions since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. From our research, artists and organisations in the UK who work with Live Art, such as the artist collectives Blast Theory and Lundahl and Seidl, have a long history of engaging with digital practice. Responses from our 2021 organisational questionnaire, inform us that digital is understood by the UK Live Art sector as an arena for disseminating and publishing Live Art. Digital plays an important role in distributing practices to audiences where the means to experience Live Art in person are limited by location, access or mobility.

While the presentation of Live Art via online spaces can have implications for the audience's experience of 'liveness' and the physical encounter, digital also offers wide-ranging possibilities for artform development, such as seeding new forms of encounter with audience members that can inform other artforms and disciplines. Digital also affords practitioners working with Live Art opportunities for remote partnerships and collaborations. Indeed, through our research consultations, organisations such as the British Council have noted high levels of interest in digital collaborative projects and digital international residencies from artists working with Live Art, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## E. Resources

Artists and organisations working with Live Art in the UK are primarily supported through public funding, involving grants from local councils, Arts Councils from across the nations, the National Lottery Community and Heritage Funds, and international funders such as European Cultural Foundation and/or national cultural institutes such as the Goethe-Institut. As discussed throughout this report, trusts and foundations such as Jerwood Arts, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Wellcome Collection also play a significant role in the funding of Live Art practices.

In addition, the UK Live Art sector is subsidised through the free labour of individuals participating in its activities, which is reflective of labour trends within the arts and cultural sector more broadly. Resilient yet underfunded, our research indicates that artists and organisations often over-promise on delivery to demonstrate value to funders and over-work to meet these demands. Self-subsidy through unpaid or underpaid labour negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of individuals involved in the Live Art sector and the sustainability of the sector's initiatives and organisations. Sources of funding and income within the Live Art sector are further illustrated and discussed in Part 2, Section Seven, on Sustaining and Organising.

### Key findings for Key Structures

- The Live Art Development Agency has been central to advocacy for and development of the Live Art sector in the UK.
- Public funding is an essential component of funding for organisations and individuals working with Live Art.
- Practitioners involved in the Live Art sector are often delivering beyond capacity to demonstrate making the most of available resources.
- Live Art UK is a useful resource for some but the criteria for membership is not clear.
- Artist-led initiatives are fundamental to the flourishing of practices within the UK Live Art sector.
- Live Art often takes place in non-traditional spaces and places and artists working with Live Art experiment with new aspects of participatory practice according to these contexts.
- The Live Art sector relies heavily on festival culture.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art often feature and/or receive support from spaces and places dedicated to artistic disciplines outside Live Art.



Emilio Rojas and Rubiane Maia, *Monument to a Body Without Roots*, Knotty Festival, Home Live Art. Photo by Alice Denny, 2019.



# Section Two: Creating and Making

## A. Processes and contexts

*Live Art has allowed me other logics of worlding, more liveable ones.*

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals



Nicola Gunn, *Working With Children*, Fierce Festival. Photo by Manuel Vason, 2019.

*Live Art has been a safe space for allowing hybridity of form into my practice, venturing into areas that I might otherwise have felt too unskilled or daunted to go into.*

*My practice has been programmed in many Live Art events, as well as other contexts that were less focused on Live Art. As a programmer I have worked to develop the exchange and conversation between dance and Live Art especially. In my teaching, I focus on Live Art and invite students to engage with Live Art as a practice.*

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

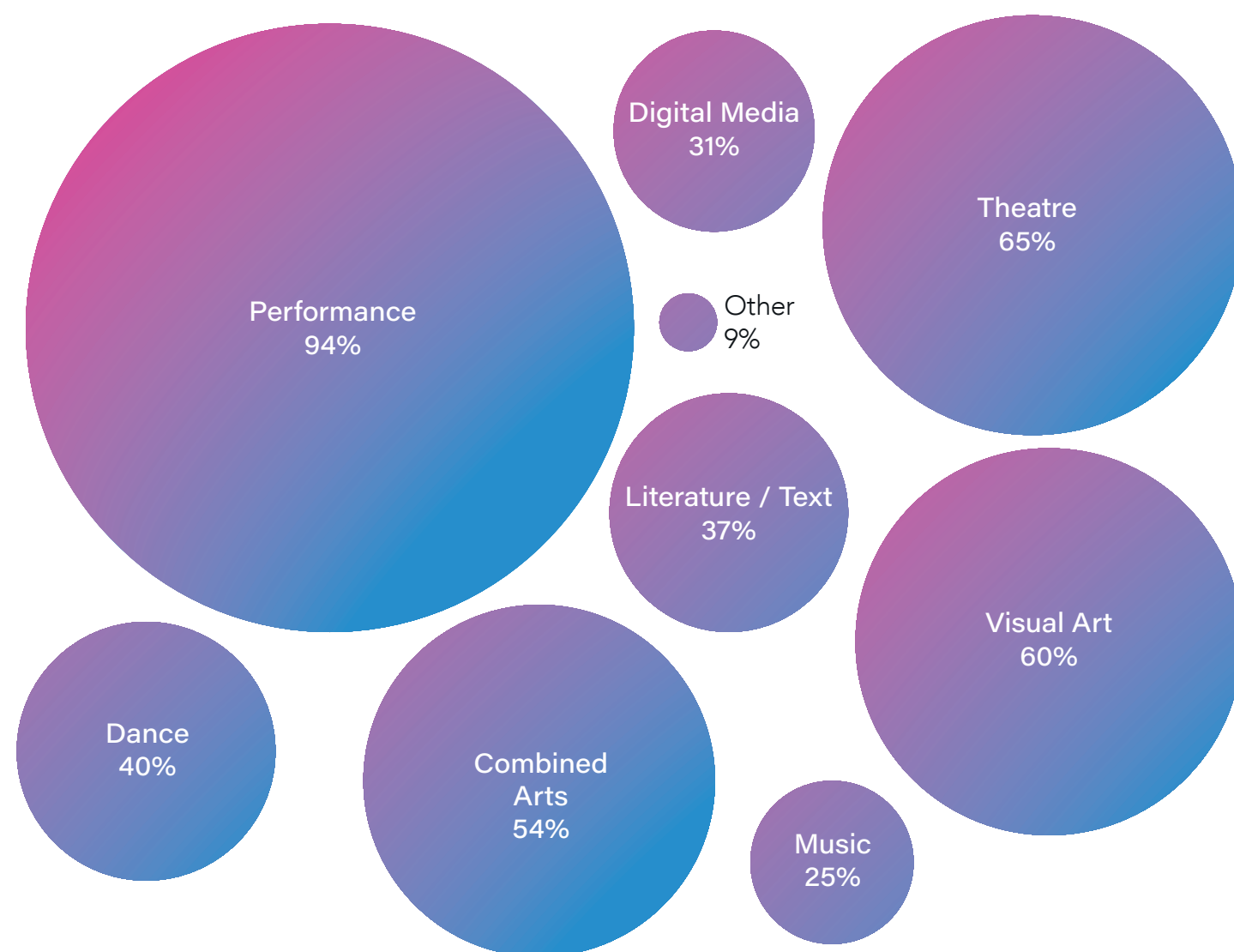
Live Art invites artists, arts organisations and those they encounter and work with to embrace complexity and different perspectives. The expansive and wide-ranging set of practices that are collected under the umbrella of Live Art cut across a variety of artforms that celebrate diverse methods and processes of making, from the messy to the risky, the spectacular and the everyday. At the same time, Live Art involves consideration, development and advancement of methodologies and rigour, drawing richly from other artforms as well as disciplines beyond the realms of arts and culture. Despite its history as a contested term, findings from our 2019 survey of individuals show that the term 'Live Art' has traction, with 69% of the 258 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement 'Live Art as a term and/or practice informs me as a creative person' (Q4, SurvInd).

Practitioners working with Live Art have strong associations with other artistic disciplines, identifying with a range of artforms and disciplines based on artform categories designated by Arts Council England. Early in our research, in consultation with our 2019 Artist Perspectives Roundtable, the category of 'performance' was added to the list of artforms/disciplines, informing design of our 2019 survey of individuals. Our research finds that 'performance' and 'experimental performance' are by and large the most resonant of terms to describe these practices. From our 2019 survey of individuals, we see that 94% of 258 respondents identify with the term performance (Q2, SurvInd).

**Q2: I Identify with the following artforms and disciplines:  
(tick all that apply)**

258 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



***I've produced several events platforming Live Art, allowing us to activate a public space in a new way and by extension reach new audiences. These sites include a council-owned playground, a nightclub, and church building. I'd like to think my practice as a producer has also facilitated experimentation with emerging artists using live elements in their practice and embedded meaningful live engagement into impact strategies.***

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

Our research indicates that the Live Art sector in the UK nurtures a broad spectrum of ideas and practices. Through our desk research, survey and research conversations, and particularly by considering first-hand accounts, we note that practitioners who engage with Live Art are attracted to the openness, diverse creative approaches and cultural practices that Live Art as a cultural strategy offers.

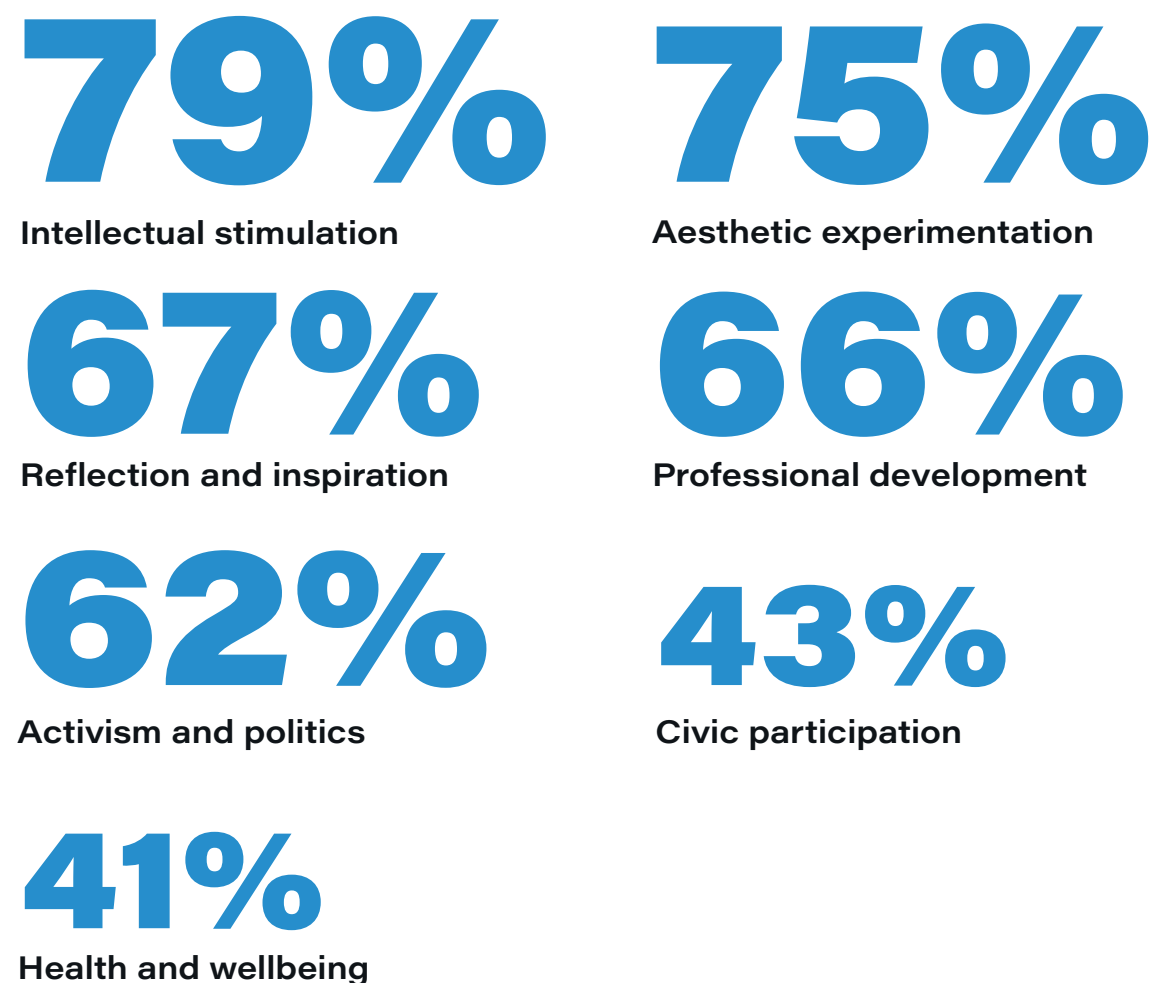
We note that Live Art's embrace of rigorous, process-led approaches into how artistic and cultural practices develop, rather than an emphasis on a finished product, was valued by participants in our research. This appears to engender a receptiveness to new ideas, a development of aesthetic and professional practice and encourages investigation into other social spheres. 73% of the 258 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals agree or strongly agree with the statement 'Live Art has enabled me to test my practice in a number of different areas' (Q9, SurvInd). Thinking about that statement, respondents were then invited to tick as many options as they felt relevant (Q10, SurvInd). 258 respondents answered as follows overleaf:



**Q10. Live Art has enabled me to test my practice in the areas of:  
(tick all that apply)**

258 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



Deploying a broad spectrum of skills, methods and knowledge, including improvisation, movement, choreography, participatory research, dialogue, sound, writing, photography, and moving image, artists working with Live Art draw on different types of physical resource and facility depending on the intentions and needs of their project or process. Whilst some may place value on making time alone in the rehearsal studio, others work collaboratively or collectively with members of the public, or in non-art environments. As is seen by the 75% of respondents who stated that Live Art enables them to test their practice in relation to aesthetic experimentation, being inspired by new ideas and experimenting with them is critical to those working with Live Art.

Working outside Live Art specific contexts, such as galleries or multi-artform festivals, is not without challenge. Live Art can include working site-responsively, in collaboration with non-arts professionals or producing outcomes in a number of different media. Depending on artists' distinct ways of working and the remit of the project, the development of Live Art often requires dialogue and collaboration between artist and curator, in order to realise the artists' vision.

Live Art practice has allowed me to consider the ways and means by which we support the creation of new work differently, to properly consider the space and time that requires, the intelligence and depth of thought and listening that live artists require from curators and their curation as part of multi-artform programming and given a sense of permission to engage and play with audiences and their perception and the disruption of their everyday in new ways.

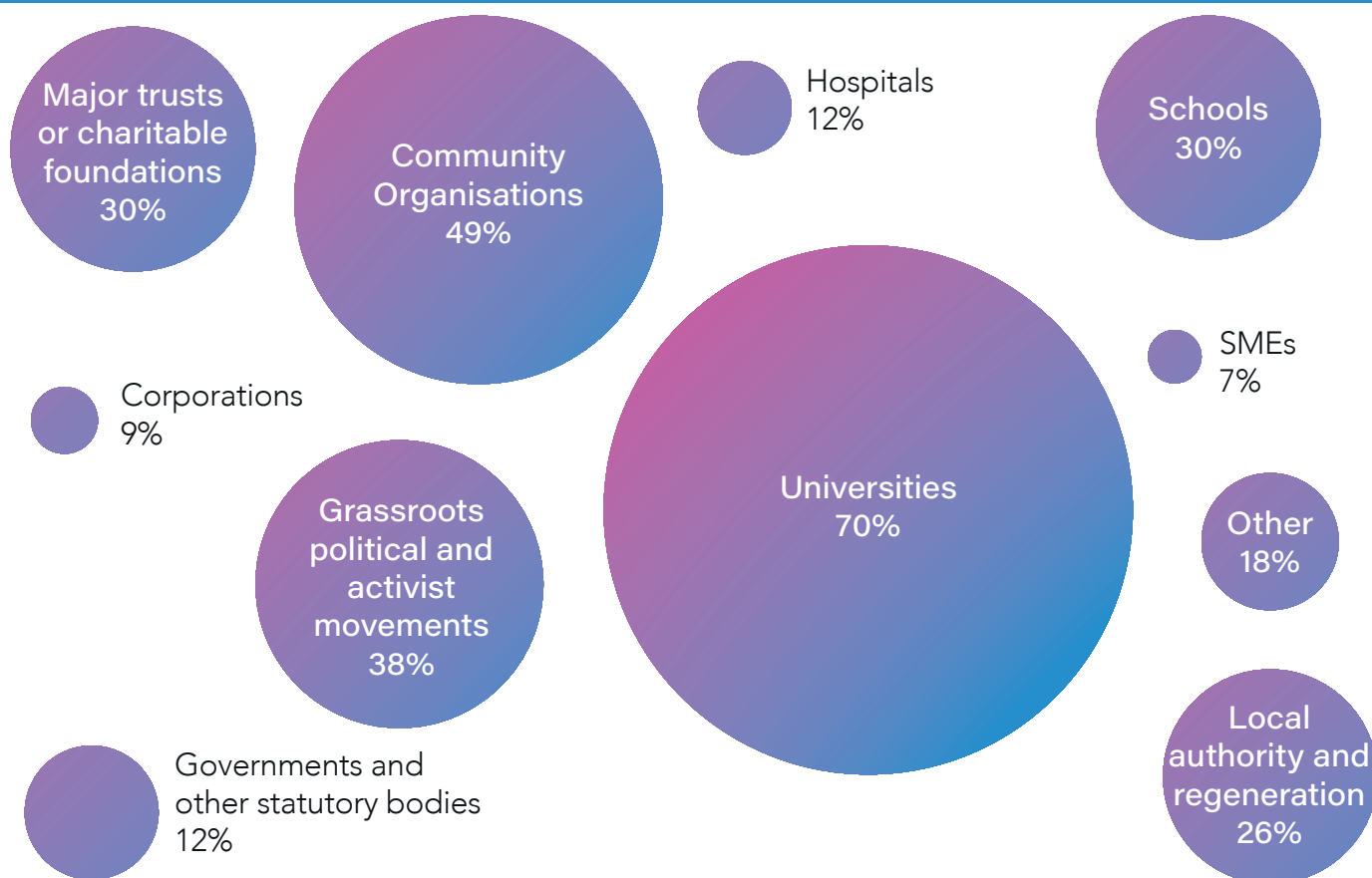
– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

Through research conversations with programmers and curators whose primary work is outside Live Art, it has been noted that the process of gaining knowledge about how to work flexibly and responsively with Live Art practitioners takes time and resource. The success of a complex Live Art project requires internal advocacy from key staff within the presenting organisation and an understanding and involvement in the process of making, not only from the technical and producing staff but also the fundraising and front of house teams.

### Q23. My work with Live Art has led me to work with organisations outside of the arts sector such as (tick all that apply):

225 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



67% percent of the 225 respondents to the 2019 survey of individuals indicated that their work with Live Art has led them to work with organisations outside the arts sector (Q23, SurvInd). We note from our research that artists working with Live Art are active collaborators, working with practitioners from other sectors, as well as being multi-disciplinary when it comes to artform practice.

Through a synthesis of our research materials, what appears specific about the character of collaboration is how artists working with Live Art foreground a critical and yet creatively open approach to the live encounter and to the relationship between bodies, histories and spaces. Work such as jamie lewis hadley's collaboration with Vishy Mahadevan, Professor of Anatomy at the Royal College of Surgeons, on the history of medicinal bloodletting (funded by the Wellcome Trust), or Barby Asante convening forums for locally-recruited womxn of colour to share experiences in relation to colonialism in the project *Declaration of Independence*, are indicative of the hybridity of collaborative work supported by the Live Art sector. Practice which enables collaboration across artforms and across sectors is a key feature for those working with Live Art.

## B. Creative and professional development

Creative and professional development is a principal activity of the Live Art sector in the UK. Professional development activity in Live Art aims to create opportunities for artists to experiment, spend time working on new ideas, learn new skills, share experiences, meet one another, feel more connected and build solidarity. As discussed in Part 2, Section One: Key Structures and outlined above in 'Processes and contexts', artists working with Live Art often lead the way in identifying the kinds of creative and professional development they need, reflecting that there is no fixed, singular way of developing a Live Art practice.

According to our 2019 survey of individuals, 64% of respondents said they had participated in and/or organised professional development programmes for Live Art practitioners (Q17, SurvInd).<sup>30</sup> The rich seam of platforms, showcases and development opportunities within the Live Art sector informs, builds and contributes to a community of Live Art practitioners. The development of those that work in the sector and the development of the sector itself is linked.

Arguably a significant operation of the sector, creative and professional development – for example, through Live Art UK initiatives – equates to support for the development of artists and other practitioners. However, since opportunities are frequently highly competitive, with applications time-consuming and often restricted to artists of a certain age or those who have been practicing for a specific number of years, many artists are not able to benefit from meaningful sustained support.

Many people are working right across the country but can't afford to go to things, even if they are free, as they have no money to get to London... There are also additional barriers in terms of childcare.

– Focus group participant, 2019

The above quote illustrates findings from our research on barriers to sector participation. Such perspectives are echoed by wider research on the arts and cultural sector. For instance, a report from TBR on artists' livelihoods, distributed by partners including the Live Art Development Agency, notes that factors such as finances, geography and class pose barriers to artists engaging with creative and professional development opportunities.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the TBR research affirms that whilst there are instances of successful artist developmental trajectories, career 'progression' is often non-linear. Non-linear career progression may be embraced by some practitioners, however, our research consultations

<sup>30</sup> Of the 225 respondents to Q17 of the 2019 survey of individuals, 145 respondents had participated in and/or organised Live Art professional development programme.

<sup>31</sup> See TBR, 'Livelihoods of Visual Artists: Summary Report', London: Arts Council England, 2018, pp.13–16, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Livelihoods%20of%20Visual%20Artists%20Summary%20Report.pdf>



evidence that lack of financial stability and linear career prospects particularly affect artists and practitioners working with Live Art as they age, often influencing their decision to leave the sector.

**Programmes including bursaries:** Many organisations working with Live Art offer opportunities for the development of artistic practice including opportunities to research, share approaches, exchange ideas and get feedback on work in development. Activities vary in budgetary support, duration, form and methodology. Some development opportunities come with financial and other in-kind support, for example both Artsadmin's Artists' Bursary Scheme (1998–ongoing) and the Katherine Araniello Bursary (2020–ongoing)<sup>32</sup> offer open-ended opportunities for artists to define their needs and next steps. hÅb's numerous artist development programmes and platforms include Divergency (in collaboration with Sustained Theatre Up North), which supports a weekly gathering of artists.

**Residencies:** These can focus on supporting research in relation to an artist's practice or centre on making a specific piece of work. As is the case in the arts sector as a whole, residencies may include studio access, a stipend and/or contribution to material costs, whilst others may be unpaid but offer free studio access or require the practitioner to pay a subsidised rate to access space. Through our research consultations, we found that residencies are especially valuable to artists where the cost of making or rehearsal space is often unaffordable, especially within urban centres.

Several schemes have presentation opportunities built in, including Compass Live Art's artist residencies, which span two weeks to one year; Nuffield Residency, Lancaster Arts; and Cambridge Junction. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, digital residencies have become increasingly important for practitioners, a notable instance of which is produced by performingborders. Residences also offer artists the opportunity to build relationships with organisations who may be able to support or present their work in the future.

**Mentoring:** Our research has identified that mentoring is an important activity for artists and workers in the sector, with more than half of the respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals stating that they offer unpaid peer mentoring to other practitioners within the sector (Q36, SurvInd). For artists who do not have regular access to studio or devising space, and those who do not have a producer, mentoring can provide a system of structured exchange and an important opportunity of discourse and dialogue for artists to talk through how they are imagining a work. Artists very much value the knowledge and experience of other artists to give creative feedback and help them to solve problems, making mentoring a significant part of creative and professional development within the Live Art sector.

<sup>32</sup> In 2020, LADA established the Katherine Araniello Bursary Awards, in memory of legendary artist and disability activist Katherine Araniello. The bursary is for two unapologetically radical and politicised 'early career' artists who work in Live Art and identify as disabled.



Last Yearz Interesting Negro, *Salty*, Home Live Art.  
Photo by Alice Denny, 2018.

Organisations within the sector are increasingly offering open access advice sessions to artists, and some artist development programmes also include mentoring provision. Other areas of advice and support include helping with grants and applications, and creative dialogue to support the development of a work at different stages.

**Developing producers and curators:** The sector has identified a need to support the development of producers and curators. This has mainly taken place as on-the-job training through opportunities with festivals, including the South West-based festival In Between Time. In 2020, the festival Block Universe worked with an emerging curator and ran a paid trainee scheme for two individuals in collaboration with the Art Fund to develop event production, curatorial and audience engagement skills. Another notable opportunity has been the Artsadmin nine-month trainee scheme which has been restructured as a three-month Producer Fellowship (2021 onwards). Whilst traineeships and internships are a well-established mechanism for developing producers and curators, if not well-managed and resourced they can reproduce the unequal working conditions which have historically been found in the arts and cultural sector more broadly.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Kimberly Allen, Jocey Quinn, Sumi Hollingworth, Athena Rose, 'Doing Diversity and Evading Equality: The Case of Student Work Placements in the Creative Sector', Yvette Taylor (ed.), *Educational Diversity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 180-200.

There is an increasing recognition of the need for continued professional development that is tailored to producers, working in organisations and independently, at different stages of their careers and for different experience levels. For instance, Producer Farm, co-produced by In Between Time, Dance Umbrella, Bristol Old Vic FERMENT, Fuel and Coombe Farm Studios; Producer Gathering, organised in collaboration with Marlborough Productions; and The Uncultured's producer mentoring scheme all aim to address the clear need for development opportunities for producers. As well, the British Council's Generate scheme, a partnership with Arts Council England, has enabled a new network of international collaborations between UK and US producers.

**Developing writers and critics:** The sector has also identified the need for the development of practitioners who can write about Live Art practice. The prevalence of first-person narrative in writing about Live Art reflects the importance of embodied experience; it is practiced as a live form. Writing about Live Art is key to how Live Art is transmitted, how Live Art is able to feed into other practices and how Live Art is archived and historicised. Writing from and about Live Art is also central to audience development. We note from our consultations that there is a desire from artists, audiences and organisations working with Live Art to encounter more writing about Live Art that is not academic and more accessible to a wider readership.

Live Art UK's project Writing from Live Art (2006) made a significant contribution to the documentation, contextualisation and artistic impact of Live Art. Other initiatives for developing writers and critics taking place in the sector have often been associated with festivals or wider programmes, including Critical Interruptions' Live Writing projects in collaboration with Steakhouse Live festival (2016) and the Diverse Actions writing workshop, in collaboration with Compass Live Art festival (2018).

**Access to opportunities:** Currently, sector provision for information about opportunities centre around a small number of listing services, including Artsadmin's e-digest email newsletter, circulating to more than 12,000 subscribers. Social media is also increasingly important to artists and practitioners working with/ in Live Art to learn about resources, learning programmes and opportunities.

### Staying informed and sharing practice

Professional platforms are key to staying informed, sharing practice, developing learning, creating connections and strengthening networks. Participants in our 2019 survey of individuals and in our consultations note that attendance at nationally recognised festivals and showcase events are key networking opportunities and often contribute to further commissions or work.

Throughout our research consultations, the sector has remarked on the thinning out of developmental platform events across the UK. Limited opportunities and barriers to networking and meeting other practitioners including promoters, programmers, curators and producers within the UK was also noted. The sector

reported that these challenges impacted practitioners' capacities to raise visibility of their practice and further their work beyond a local or regional level. Those living in non-urban settings or where there is little sectoral infrastructure for Live Art reported this was a particularly acute issue.

Despite the importance of professional development opportunities to artists, practitioners and organisations within the sector, we note through our consultations and survey of individuals that there remain numerous barriers to accessing development programmes. These barriers include:

- A focus on development opportunities for 'emerging' or younger artists; while there are development opportunities for those who have been practicing for more than 10 years, these are limited.
- A lack of local opportunities and the cost of travel/accommodation to attend opportunities, this particularly affects those with caring responsibilities, D/deaf and disabled practitioners or those with other access needs.
- A lack of paid-for opportunities, this particularly affects individuals from underrepresented groups within the arts and culture sector, such as those from low-income backgrounds, from ethnically diverse backgrounds and D/deaf and disabled practitioners.

We note that informal, self-organised and peer-to-peer professional development activities, such as mentoring, are central to the health of the sector although often under-acknowledged and under-resourced. This is further evidenced in Part 2, Section Seven, on Sustaining and Organising.

## Key findings for Creating and Making

- Artists working with Live Art are interdisciplinary and value collaboration with individuals and organisations outside of the arts.
- Artists working with Live Art value research and process-based approaches, which allow artists to experiment with form and different ways of working.
- There is rich and varied provision of professional development for artists within the UK Live Art sector, delivered through formal organised activity as well as peer support.
- There has been limited professional development provision for writers, curators and producers working with Live Art.





Disabled Avant Garde, *Institutional Classics*, Steakhouse Festival.  
Photo by Greg Goodale, 2015.



# Section Three: Higher Education

## A. Intersections of Live Art and higher education

Our research emphasised that the intersection between Live Art and higher education departments in Theatre and Performance and Fine Art is extremely significant. Through our consultation process and in our 2019 survey of individuals, participants expressed the importance, value and high stakes of the relationship between the sector and higher education, from articulating Live Art as an artistic practice and art historical category to professional development and workforce cross-subsidy.

The development of the UK Live Art sector was linked through policy to higher education from its inception, with the Arts Council in London making engagement with higher education a condition of funding for a new development agency for Live Art in 1999.<sup>34</sup> At the time, other than a few institutions such as Dartington College of Arts, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Ulster and Cardiff School of Art and Design, there was little sustained provision for non-mainstream experimental performance-based practices. Specifically, there was a lack of provision for emerging artists and arts workers working with Live Art in London. Addressing the need in London became part of the initial scope for establishing the Live Art Development Agency (LADA).

There was deep recognition from participants in our research of the important role that LADA has played in increasing awareness and access to non-mainstream experimental performance practices for students, researchers and teachers in higher education. Since LADA's beginnings, it has successfully advocated for and developed strong links with higher education, through various partnership projects as well as through its Study Room and publications. East End collaborations, a decade-long project with Queen Mary University of London (1999-2009), Performance Matters (2009-2012) a collaboration with Roehampton University and Goldsmiths, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the launch of MA Live Art at Queen Mary, University of London in 2018, have offered opportunities for students, artists and academics to engage in practice-

based research, documentation, professional development and knowledge exchange. LADA's impressive public archive, Study Room guides, bookshop and publishing partnership with Intellect has been key in supporting the recognition of Live Art as an art historical category within higher education and increased access to the documentation of performance and Live Art practices for students and researchers.



Ivy Monteiro, *a performance lecture on queer spirituality and Afro Futurism*, Live Art Development Agency. Photo by Ben Harris, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Elyssa Livergant and Cecilia Wee in conversation with Lois Keidan, London, 16 February 2021.



## B. Teaching and research

The study of Live Art in higher education sits across a variety of disciplines. Through our 'Higher Education' roundtables and wider desk research, we noted a spread of institutions and departments across the UK working with Live Art. Artists, organisations, practices and methodologies associated with Live Art appear across curricula in theatre, fine art, visual and digital cultures, and dance, and across undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programmes.<sup>35</sup>

In our research consultations, it was noted that the term Live Art is not always used in the context of higher education and instead terms like experimental performance, performance art, visual culture and contemporary performance practice are employed. The provision of Live Art in an institution is dependent, to some degree, on the individual research and teaching interests of lecturers and how this intersects with departmental and wider institutional cultures. Live Art is contextualised in a range of ways, from gender and disability studies to socially-engaged and spatial practices. It is studied through practice-based and scholarly modules and taught as an art historical category.

***Mainly work in higher education. Live Art over twenty-plus years has fundamentally expanded the possibilities / options for the work I do with my students, and the models available to them for thinking, doing and imagining in their own work.***

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

Consultees noted that the methodological approaches they associate with Live Art, including an emphasis on openness, experimentation between critical thinking and creative practice to enact change, were incredibly productive for their pedagogical approaches with students. We also note that a number of higher education departments undertake important work in connecting students with arts organisations through internships, work placements, industry input to modules, and collaborative doctoral awards.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this research to map all instances of the appearance of Live Art in UK higher education curricula, there have been several publications pointing to its pervasiveness, including the special edition of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 11/2 (2020) entitled 'Training for Performance Art and Live Art', guest edited by Heike Roms and Bryan Brown.

<sup>36</sup> See materials from Liz Tomlin's Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Incubate: Propagate Network, <https://incubate-propagate.com>, and her unpublished research paper 'Incubate: Propagate: Networked Ecologies of New Performance Making', 2017, <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/151581/1/151581.pdf>

Live Art's approach to embodied research also sits well with broader practice-based research approaches that gained legitimisation in higher education in the late 1990s and 2000s.<sup>37</sup> From our research roundtables on higher education, we have found that practices and artists associated with Live Art are important to teaching and research because they embolden students and academics to explore beyond their preconceived ideas about art and performance making, and foster experiences of creative and cultural practice as socially-engaged and alive.

Consultees repeatedly noted that the provision for Live Art within higher education is under threat, not only from increasing pressure on studio provision and budgets, but also the increased emphasis on student experience, and particularly employability. While employability has been on the UK government's agenda since the late 1990s, over the last decade it has increasingly moved to the centre of policy decisions, with demands placed on higher education to prove that it offers students 'value for money' in relation to the labour market.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the conditions of the cultural labour market have been the subject of critical inquiry by a range of scholars and activists who have argued that the challenge graduates face is not necessarily due to a lack of skills developed by individuals through higher education. Instead, it reflects the structural inequities of the cultural labour market itself, which is marked by lower economic prospects for graduates because of an oversupply of workers, precarious working conditions and an inequity of access to opportunities.<sup>39</sup>

These economic and policy shifts in higher education have been accompanied by a withdrawal of support for experimental and critical practices and an emphasis on more traditional arts training provisions. Our consultees reported the impact of shrinking departmental budgets on artists working with Live Art to access support, space and share their practice with students, reducing Live Art's visibility in higher education and hence making it more challenging to argue for its value. This has put pressure on the provision of Live Art in some UK institutions. Of the disciplinary representation in our consultations, it appears this shift is being felt most acutely in theatre and performance departments, where practices and pedagogies drawn from Live Art have had a healthy presence over the last twenty years.

<sup>37</sup> See Robin Nelson (ed.), *Practice as Research: Practice, Protocols, Pedagogies and Resistances*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 3–22. Nelson traces the rise of creative practice as a key methodology of research in higher education in the UK.

<sup>38</sup> See Ronald W. McQuaid and Colin Lindsay, 'The Concept of Employability', *Urban Studies*, 42/2 (February 2005), pp.197–219 and Vicki Belt, Paul Drake and Katherine Chapman, 'Employability Skills: A Research and Policy Briefing', London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010, <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/employability-skills-policy-briefing-ukces.pdf>

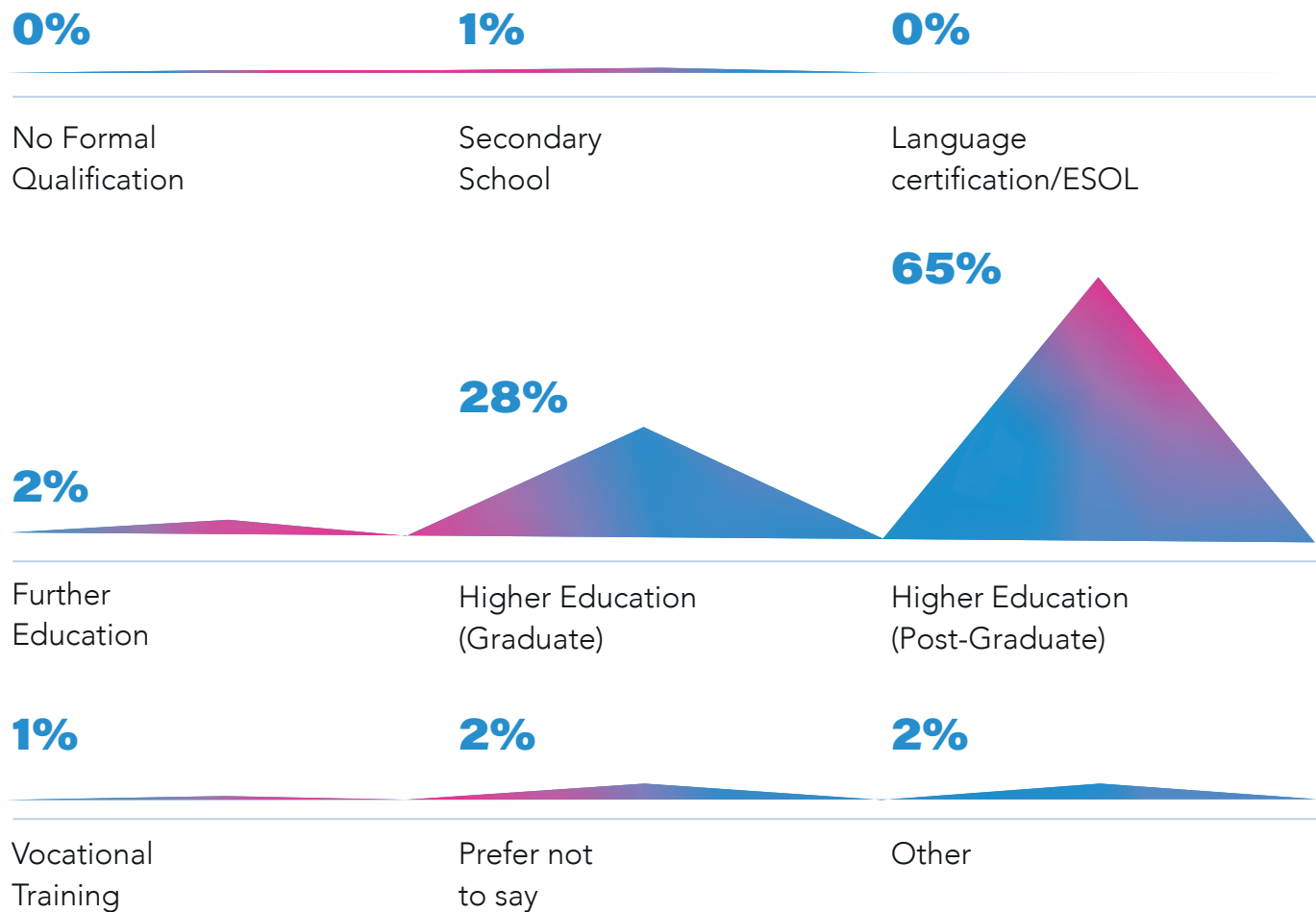
<sup>39</sup> See Daniel Aston and Catherine Noonan (eds), *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 1–21.

# C. Workforce and professional development and cross-subsidy

Our 2019 survey of individuals illustrates a highly qualified sector. Of the 216 respondents to our question on educational qualifications, 93% of respondents held an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (Q43, SurvInd).

- 28% (61) completed an undergraduate degree
- 65% (140) completed a postgraduate degree

**Q43. My highest educational qualification is:**  
216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



This reinforces existing data on the creative and cultural industries which shows that workers tend to be highly trained. For example, in 2015 almost 60% of those working in music, performing and visual arts held a degree or equivalent.<sup>40</sup>

Respondents were also asked if they had undertaken a higher education qualification that directly informed their work with Live Art (Q12, SurvInd). Over half (55%) of the 258 respondents to this question responded yes. Higher education plays a central role in the development of emerging and or returning artists and arts workers in the Live Arts sector.

## Q12. I have and/or am taking a higher education qualification that directly informs my Live Art practice:

216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



We need to talk about the intersection between Live Art and academia: how many artists turn to academia for a regular income, how academia creates barriers to the free exchange of information and knowledge, how academia exploits its workers, and how it perpetuates a culture of ‘public engagement activities’ (including showing, documenting or talking about art) being done for free, for audiences of other people in academic institutions.

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

We also note that higher education plays a central role in the employment of artists. From our 2019 survey of individuals, of the 225 respondents to our question about working with organisations outside the arts sector, 70% had worked with universities (Q23, SurvInd). Through our consultations, we found that higher education plays a central role in cross-subsidising artists through hourly, fractional and fixed term contracts.

<sup>40</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport, ‘Creative Industries: Focus on Employment’, London: Office for National Statistics, June 2016, p.14–15, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/534305/Focus\\_on\\_Employment\\_revised\\_040716.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/534305/Focus_on_Employment_revised_040716.pdf)



As the function of the university becomes increasingly wedded to employability agendas, there appears to be continuing government pressure on degrees that deliver low economic value in terms of graduate earnings. A decade of shifts in funding structures to higher education, particularly the defunding of arts provision, look set to continue, raising serious concerns for the Live Art sector in relation to artists and arts workers entering the sector, cross-subsidy for those working in the Live Art sector, audience development, and resourcing.

An emphasis by higher education management on employability may offer potential terrain for the Live Art sector and those working with Live Art in higher education to partner and foreground the alternative value and contribution of arts and cultural work, particularly in relation to active citizenship and public engagement, while also critically interrogating the ways both entrench or reproduce problematic aspects of sectoral working practices and values.

## Key findings for Higher Education

- Live Art in the UK has both benefited from and contributed to the teaching, research and development of experimental, performance practices within higher education.
- People who work in the Live Art sector are highly qualified.
- Higher education has played an important role in supporting and cross-subsidising organisations and individuals working in the Live Art sector.
- Resources for arts provision within higher education, including departments that work with Live Art, are under particular stress at this time.



Franko B and Nando Messias, Live Art Now, Live Art Development Agency and Queen Mary University of London. Still from video by Claire Nolan, 2019.

# Section Four: Audiences and Influence

## A. Geography and reach

*The Live Art sector produces fearless artists and producers who can go on to make work for a variety of audiences and contexts.*

– Focus group participant, 2020

The Live Art sector in the UK has strong regional, national and global reach. Respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals indicate clusters of activity within London, Scotland and the North West. Of the 258 respondents, 34% are based in London, 12% in the North West and 11% in Scotland (Q6, SurvInd). We also note 8% of respondents are based in the South East and South West respectively. 5% of respondents were based in the Midlands and in Yorkshire, with 4% in the East of England and the North East respectively.

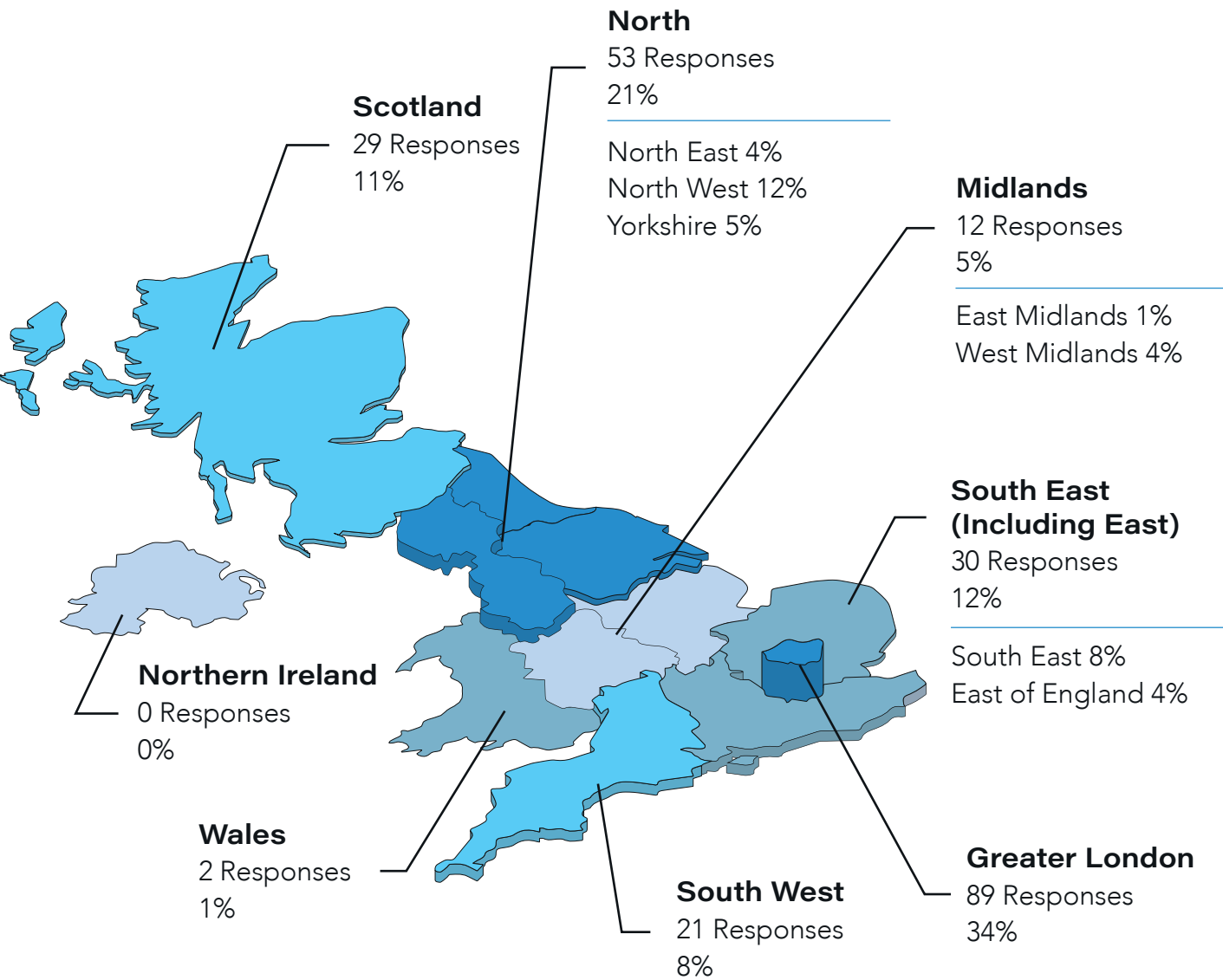
We note that a small number of respondents (22) are not based in the UK. 5% of respondents are based in the EU, 3% of respondents are based in Australia, Brazil and North America.

There were very few responses from individuals working in Wales and Northern Ireland, which is also reflected in data from our 2021 organisational questionnaire. Following further consultations with artists, researchers and organisations in these nations, which indicate a healthy presence of Live Art activity, the lack of response to our 2019 survey of individuals could reflect some of the limits of the reach of the survey and the usage of the term Live Art.

### Q6. I am based in:

258 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



EU	14 Responses	5%
North America	1 Response	0.39%
Other	7 Responses	3%



Of the twenty-two respondents to our 2021 organisational questionnaire, six organisations are based in London, two in the East of England, five in the South East, two in the Midlands, three in the North, one in Yorkshire and one in the South West (Q5, OrgQues).

One organisation is based across London, the South East and Europe; and one in Scotland. There were no respondents from Wales and Northern Ireland.

Some organisational respondents qualified where their work takes place. For example, a London-based group includes people located across the UK; another in the South East has a permanent London platform partner.

By way of context, of the seventy-nine organisations who identified with the disciplinary sub-classifier 'Visual Arts – Live & Performance Art' and applied for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England for the period of 2018–2022, twenty-six (37%) were based in London, eleven (14%) in the North East and North West respectively, seven (9%) in Yorkshire and the Humber, six (8%) in the South West, five (6%) in West Midlands, and four (5%) in the South East and East England respectively. However, as Live Art is not a disciplinary funding category in and of itself, it is not possible to determine through Arts Council England's data on NPOs the degree to which Live Art and performance are core to these organisations' offer or commitment. The wording of the sub-classifier 'Live & Performance Art' is also not necessarily consistent with the use of the term Live Art.

Further contextual data from Arts Council England shows us the following: 329 of the applications to the National Lottery Project Grants programme in 2019–20 (successful and unsuccessful) included at least one of the following markers related to Live Art: The key word 'Live Art' or 'Performance Art' in the application project title, applicant name or project description, and/or the sub-classifier 'Disciplinary type – Visual Art-Live & Performance Art' or 'sub art form – Visual Art-Live Art'. Of these 329 applicants, 136 (41%) were based in the ACE-defined area of London, 105 (32%) in the North, 70 in the South East (21%), 38 (12%) in the Midlands and 22 (7%) in the South West.

## Regional and national trends

The relatively small scale of the UK Live Art sector in relation to the geographic spread of activity and resource means that singular shifts in areas, such as the departure of an individual or the closure of a space or organisation, has a significant impact on the provision and circulation of Live Art regionally and nationally.

The lack of dedicated Live Art venues and the rapid turnover of staff in non-Live Art specific venues creates challenges for artists, producers and receiving venues in working with Live Art practices. Issues include a lack of specialist marketing and production support for those working with Live Art which has a knock-on effect on audience development and public engagement.

There is a desire from the sector for stronger intra- and inter-regional collaboration and sustained partnership working.

It is beyond the scope of this report to offer a detailed breakdown of regional and national activities.

**Below we offer a brief snapshot drawing on regional and national focus groups, the qualitative and quantitative data gathered from the 2019 survey of individuals and the 2021 organisational questionnaire, our desk research, and wider consultations.**

### Scotland

- There is a concentration of sectoral infrastructure in Glasgow and productive collaborations across organisations and initiatives of different scales.

For a sector that does so brilliantly to reflect the diversity of its artists, I feel that it does not go far enough to support and encourage a diversity of geography. I live in Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, and I feel like this. If I were a Live Artist who lived in rural Scotland, I would imagine I would feel even more of a disconnect.

– Respondent based in Scotland, 2019 survey of individuals

### Northern Ireland

- Live Art activity centres in Belfast and Derry, however, flows between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are central to the health of activity.
- Bbeyond has been, and continues to be, a central organisation for the development of Live Art in Northern Ireland.

### North East:

- There is a sense that resources are heavily weighted towards Baltic and there could be more of a spread of support for small to mid-sized organisations.

'Live Art' is a term that is not really used by artists working with Live Art. How do the practices that could benefit from support from the sector engage if they don't identify with it?

– Respondent based in the North East, 2019 survey of individuals

### ***North West and Yorkshire:***

- Interregional networks for touring and networking are present but would benefit from further resourcing and modelling.

At this stage most of my work has been self-initiated. It would be nice to see more opportunities for artists like myself in the North West. I recently performed at Emergency in Manchester and have been involved with SPILL YER TEA in Liverpool. We need more platforms such as these.

– Respondent based in the North West/Yorkshire, 2019 survey of individuals

### ***Wales***

- The impact of the closure of the Time-Based Studies Department at Cardiff School of Art and Design (CSAD) and the restructuring of Aberystwyth's Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies has yet to be fully felt in the sector.
- There is a concentration of activity in Cardiff.

### ***Midlands***

- The sector has articulated a lack of regular provision, platforms and support in the Midlands which impacts a sense of community and opportunities for creative and professional development.
- Birmingham is home to Fierce Festival. The festival identifies the need for meaningful regional artist development, further resources are needed to invest in and support this activity.

My practice has fed into Live Art in Birmingham in particular as I saw gaps and holes for artists here and understanding what I would want as an artist, set about creating events and opportunities for other artists to experiment, get mentoring, connect with other artists and organisations, support artists, source good documentation and funds for paying artists etc... Due to our own life restraints we have had to fold but we continue to support other artists where we can. It's a very precarious type of work so at the bare minimum, peer support gives at least some foundation of strength to each other to keep pushing.

– Respondent based in the Midlands, 2019 survey of individuals

### ***London***

- London is the primary base for most artists who work in the sector and for the provision for Live Art. The physical presence of the Live Art Development Agency and Artsadmin and the high concentration of higher education providers adds to the profile of this activity. Access to cross-art sector opportunities is also greatest in London.
- The impact of factors associated with gentrification, such as less availability of space and higher rents, are particularly acute.

We've lost loads of people, their knowledge, experience because people realise it's no longer affordable to be here anymore. I get that we need to fund other parts of the country, but we can't just defund London. We need better structures in London.

– London focus group participant, 2020

### ***South East (including East of England)***

- There are markers and outposts of a lively sector in the South East that were not there 8 years ago, but more support is needed to strengthen and share resources.

Live Art and performance has created a vital sense of queer community in the place where we live.

– Respondent based in the South East, 2019 survey of individuals

### ***South West***

- The Arnolfini's shift away from its live programme in 2009 contributed to disinvestment in Live Art within the region. This continues to have long-term effects on the energy and development of the sector in the South West.
- Bristol is home to In Between Time. The festival identifies the need for meaningful regional artist development, further resources are needed to invest in and support this activity.

Working in the South West outside Bristol sometimes feels like being in rural isolation in the socio-economic sense. Is Live Art an urban pastime? There is such a thing as being rural and experimental.

– Respondent based in the South West, 2019 survey of individuals



### Reach and Collaboration

Organisations working with Live Art reach publics locally, nationally, internationally and increasingly online.

For most of the twenty-two organisations participating in our 2021 organisational questionnaire, working locally is important to their practice, with seventeen working locally often and most of the time (Q6, OrgQues). A number of organisations stated they often work regionally (thirteen) and nationally (fourteen). International work is important but slightly less prevalent, with eleven organisations indicating that they often work internationally. Online presentation of work was important to respondents; all organisations present their work online and for sixteen respondents doing so happens often and most of the time.

It is, however, important to read the above figures in the context of the timing of the 2021 organisational questionnaire (Spring 2021) and its relationship to the COVID-19 pandemic. In further comments on this question some respondents indicated that, because of COVID-19, their regional, national and international work had stopped and they would have answered differently at another time. Similarly, respondents indicated that because of COVID-19 they were primarily working online.

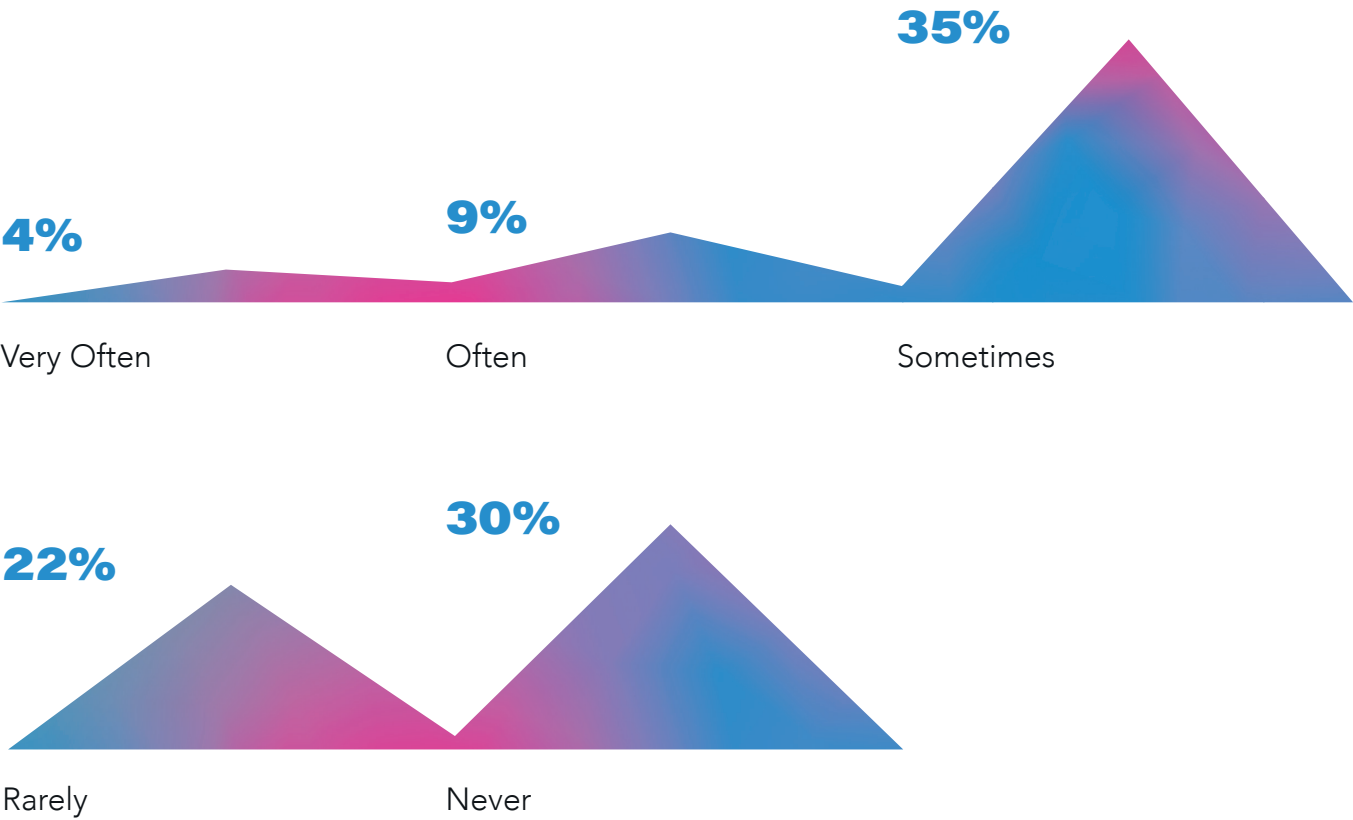
Through consultations and desk research, we note a robust commitment from those working in the sector to engage locally. Equally, there is ample evidence that UK-based practitioners and organisations working with Live Art have a national and international outlook which is matched by national and international interest in Live Art from the UK.

48% of the 225 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals indicated that they receive 'commissions and/or invitations from national and international promoters' sometimes, often or very often, 22% rarely received such invitations and 30% never received invitations (Q26, SurvInd).

### Q26. I have received commissions and/or invitations from national and international promoters:

225 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



### Touring

Touring can offer audiences and venues valuable exposure to Live Art practices, however, the sector has identified touring as an activity that presents some challenges. Live Art is often context-specific and therefore touring can demand a more involved and collaborative quality of hosting than conventional get-ins, as is discussed in the *Getting It Out There* symposium and publication on the future of touring and distribution for contemporary theatre and Live Art.<sup>41</sup>

Following our consultations, we note that the high turnover of marketing and producing staff in receiving venues impacts on building audiences for Live Art practices. Producing and technical capacity within receiving venues to support the hybridity of Live Art practices in relation to form, duration and technical scope also creates additional pressures and challenges. Touring is often cross-subsidised by

41 Mary Paterson and Theron Schmidt (eds), *Getting It Out There*.

the artist and/or producer as the work of organising tours is labour intensive. As a result, touring is by and large only financially viable when artists have reached a level of visibility and acclaim in their careers to achieve tour fees (or additional funding) commensurate with the labour involved in tour organisation.

There is currently an absence of infrastructure in the UK Live Art sector to support rural practices and touring but a desire from the sector to develop this area. Home Live Art's partnership with rural specialist arts organisation Applause Rural Touring (2019) involved the co-commissioning of an outdoor work to be toured to locations across the South East, an example of how Live Art practices can be shared outside urban locations. Similarly, there is scope to evaluate the effectiveness of Battersea Arts Centre's Collaborative Touring Network (2013–17); the sector would benefit from further research in this area.

### International collaboration

Artists and practitioners working in the UK have significantly shaped international discourse and practice in Live Art. Work by artists and organisations working with Live Art in the UK has informed the development of initiatives such as the international Live Art Prize, convened by the ANTI – Contemporary Art Festival in Finland. Similarly, UK Live Art practitioners and organisations have contributed to presentations and curatorial frameworks of the independent, 'no-budget project' Venice Performance Art Week, directed by Vest & Page.



Lucy McCormick, *Triple Threat*, WATCH OUT Festival, Cambridge Junction.  
Photo by Claire Haigh, 2017.

The UK Live Art sector also demonstrates strong international collaboration, with data from our 2019 survey of individuals indicating that of 225 respondents, 71% collaborate with artists who work with Live Art from across the world sometimes, often or very often (Q21, SurvInd). Similarly, 45% of 225 respondents indicated that they had both attended and presented or supported work presented at a number of international festivals, including ANTI Festival (Finland), Live Collision (Ireland), Venice International Performance Week (Italy) and Push festival (Canada) (Q19, SurvInd).

Despite positive engagement by UK artists and practitioners working with Live Art with international scenes, a respondent to our 2019 survey of individuals said:

My experience of the British funding context in comparison to the Canadian one is that there is very little support for artists to perform outside of the UK. I see this happening almost never for artists who are not extremely established. This means that there's an insular quality to the sector and that artists making amazing work here are not known outside of the UK. This seems to be a real fault of the funding structures available.

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

This comment about the financial barriers to international mobility for UK Live Art practitioners is reflected in our data analysis. Correlation analysis of our 2019 survey of individuals shows that there is a weak relationship between the number of years respondents have worked in the sector (Q5, SurvInd) and whether respondents received commissions and/or invitations from national and international promoters (Q26, SurvInd). This means that the longer artists work within the Live Art sector, they are slightly more likely to receive international and/or national attention.

Whilst a number of Live Art UK members have participated in international collaborative programmes, including In Between Time's European collaborative project Up to Nature and Artsadmin's partnership Art Climate Transition, a European co-operation project on ecology, climate change and social transition, the comparatively low number of responses to questions about travelling to international festivals and platforms underscores the need to ensure that international opportunities are accessible for artists and practitioners in the UK Live Art sector. The expected effects of Brexit on artists and practitioners working with/ in the UK Live Art sector will be further discussed in Part 2, Section Eight, Post-March 2020 conditions.



## B. Publics and influence

Artists and organisations working with Live Art present their work through a range of contexts including live presentations and processes, encounters, documentation, publications and digital media. Artists and organisations working with Live Art are uniquely invested in creating a range of opportunities for the public to engage with their work and generate new understandings and experiences. The nature of the encounter between artist and audience or artwork and participant is of paramount concern for artists and organisations working with Live Art. Similarly, digital experimentation continues to inform understanding of relationships with audiences in arts and culture more broadly.

Artists and practitioners who work with Live Art move from private to public processes of practice, through different artform contexts, bringing Live Art to a broad range of spaces over varying timescales. Jo Fong's *Ways of Being Together* is an example of how Live Art offers audiences a range of ways to be inspired, challenged and connected through its experimentation with form and engagement with diverse artists. The project draws on choreography to bring expert and non-expert performers together to explore belonging and community through a series of intimate discussions, workshop exercises and performances.

From 2015 to 2020, Live Art UK undertook research about audiences as part of the Audience Agency's Audience Finder toolkit. The Audience Agency's 2018–19 evaluation of their work with Live Art UK drew on a survey of 241 respondents from the audiences of five organisations/projects: Artsadmin, Cambridge Junction, Fierce Festival, hÅb/Word of Warning and Live Art Development Agency, noting that the demographic profile of respondents was relatively young and ethnically diverse with 61% aged between 25 and 44, and 25% not identifying as 'White British'. Audience Agency's research articulates 'an appreciation for the special way that artist and audience interact in Live Art and for the way that the sector proactively aims to present arts that is different from the mainstream'.<sup>42</sup>

The motivations and impacts of Live Art on audiences, as reported in the Audience Agency research, corroborate findings from our research conversations and 2019 survey of individuals that Live Art is valued by audiences as having a unique creative offer. Moreover, our research finds that artists and practitioners working with Live Art are also invested in experiencing Live Art. According to our 2019 survey of individuals, of the 258 respondents to the question 'I attend Live Art events as an audience member', 76% of respondents said they attended every 2 months or more regularly (Q13, SurvInd). Of the 258 responses to a question about motivations for attending Live Art events in our 2019 survey of individuals, 78% agreed with the statement 'to be intellectually stimulated', 76% cited 'to experience and think about different perspectives', 74% said 'to be provoked and challenged'

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Goodacre and Holly Jevons, 'Live Art UK – Audience research report 2018/19' London: Audience Agency, 2019. Source: Live Art UK archive, held by Live Art Development Agency p.6.

(Q14, SurvInd). A slightly lower percentage of respondents said they attend Live Art events 'for professional reasons' (70%).

### Collaborative and participatory practice

Individuals and organisations working with Live Art value a variety of settings and contexts. Live Art often inhabits hyperlocal as well as international contexts, from neighbourhood placemaking and socially-engaged projects to clubnights, and from highly visible festivals to public programmes in major cultural institutions. Often inviting non-professionals and members of the public to participate in the creation of narratives about where they call 'home', Live Art can offer audiences new frames to experience their local community, contributing to creativity in the everyday.

In 2016, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation launched a multi-year inquiry into the 'civic role' of arts organisations, emphasising the role of co-production, everyday creativity and hyperlocality as key to organisations re-imagining their civic value to communities.<sup>43</sup> Collaboration and participation are about co-creation, expanding the limits of creative processes and making space for more voices to be heard. At the same time, there is a risk that collaborative and participatory practices can inadvertently reinforce or create new power differentials or mask existing hierarchies. We note through our desk research and consultations that the way artists working with Live Art navigate these tricky spaces has arisen as an important concern for the sector.

With its emphasis on the live encounter, and on breaking down boundaries (between art and life or audience and performer), Live Art has been at the forefront of developing new performative forms and possibilities for collaboration and participation. This operates at an institutional level and at the level of individual projects. The value of socially-engaged practice has been increasingly championed by a variety of voices, as a way of increasing access to the arts, addressing important social issues in communities, supporting civic engagement and also as a mode for aesthetic experimentation and inventive creativity. Academic interest in social engagement and participation has often been informed by Live Art practices in the UK; this has been further detailed in Jen Harvie's, *Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, which examines the politics of participation in contemporary performance practices.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), *Rethinking Relationships: Phase One of the Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations*, 2017, <https://civicleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/rethinking-relationships-phase-one-of-the-inquiry-into-the-civic-role-of-arts-organisations>

<sup>44</sup> Jen Harvie, *Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

The centrality of bodies and encounters with the everyday in Live Art practices brings with it questions of relationality, identity and ethics. Oreet Ashery's *The World Is Flooding*, commissioned by Tate, was developed in collaboration with the organisations Freedom from Torture, UK Lesbian and Gay Immigrant Group (UKLGIG), and Portugal Prints (a therapeutic arts programme in Brent). Artists working with Live Art often push at the boundaries of participation and stage critical questions about power dynamics. The Canadian performance company Mammalian Diving Reflex, for example, in their participatory performance *Haircuts by Children*, which has been presented at Fierce festival, Wunderbar festival and the London International Festival of Theatre, engages intergenerational audiences and challenges conceptions of training and professionalism. Through his workshops, performances and discussions, artist Daniel Oliver delves into the 'awkwardness' of participation and connects this with a celebration of neurodiversity.

One of the impulses behind a number of participatory projects is to explore and expand civic engagement and municipalism, as well as the complex (often fraught) currents of regeneration and placemaking.

For example, Scottee & Friends' *Would Like to Meet* creates opportunities for local people on a particular UK street to get to know their neighbours. Likewise, the commissioning of Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk by the Liverpool Biennial provided opportunities for people in Anfield to rethink the future of their neighbourhood following a failed large-scale regeneration project.<sup>45</sup> In 2018, the Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) was awarded funding by Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence scheme to build a network of organisations and projects exploring the idea of co-creation in connection with cultural participation. Although beyond the scope of this report, there are important questions to be asked about the practice of culture-led regeneration and cultural democracy, particularly in relation to who is emboldened to participate and to what degree, given the impact of gentrification and broader inequities within UK society.<sup>46</sup> These concerns are further amplified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and looking ahead to its potential social and economic impacts.

<sup>45</sup> Liverpool was at the heart of the controversial Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinders programme (2002-11) that aimed to demolish and 'renew failing housing markets' in the Midlands and the North of England. See Ian Cole and John Flint, 'Addressing housing affordability, clearance and relocation issues in the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders', London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/addressing-housing-affordability-clearance-and-relocation-issues-housing-market-renewal>

<sup>46</sup> As Nick Wilson, Jonathan Gross and Anna Bull explain, cultural democracy challenges hierarchies of cultural value and is when 'people have the substantive social freedom to make versions of culture.' See 'Towards Cultural Democracy: promoting cultural capabilities for everyone', London: Cultural Institute at Kings, 2017, p.3 and p.18, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/towards-cultural-democracy-2017-kcl.pdf>

The imperative for quantitative measurement of social impact as a part of funding monitoring and reporting processes can be difficult for artists and organisations working with collaborative and participatory practices. The timescales of projects working with Live Art might be longer than is practicable to measure, and what's produced may be intangible, such as the development of a network of relationships within a community or a shift in public or private discussion. Furthermore, whilst the aim of a participatory work may be to produce a sense of civiness, participatory approaches to Live Art also entail work that is more spiky or confrontational. The collective Liberate Tate, for example, started as a participatory workshop at Tate Modern on art and activism that transformed into a programme of 'creative disobedience' aimed at agitating for Tate to stop accepting donations from oil companies.

Throughout our research we have noted that without material resources, collaborative or participatory work may be confined to temporary, fleeting encounters. But with the proper support, it can be transformative for artists, organisations and wider publics in supporting structural change.

### Audience development: case studies

Approaches to audience development in the UK Live Art sector are diverse, responsive and framed as part of creative and critical discourse. Live Art's focus on cross-artform exchange and experimentation is echoed in the fluid ways in which the sector encourages engagement and participation with publics and wider cultural and social contexts.

Artists and organisations work together to understand and devise strategies for audience recruitment and development that are relevant to the specific shape of artist projects, context of the location, organisational partnerships and capacities of producing organisations. Through our focus groups and research conversations, we find that nuance and sensitivity to the needs of a project are fundamental to developing audiences for Live Art, and that as the audience encounter is such a vital constituent part of Live Art, a project's public outcomes may appear differently in different locations, requiring a change in audience development tactics.

In order to further illustrate the diversity of approaches to developing audiences for Live Art, we present three project case studies.



## Case study: The Posh Club by Duckie, London and the South East, 2013 - present



The Posh Club, DUCKIE, Hackney. Photo by Peter Robertshaw.

The Posh Club is a glamorous performance and social club for older people held in five locations across London and the South East, conceived and produced by LGBTQ performance company Duckie. Posh Clubs take place at each location in three blocks of ten weeks. The events are held in church halls and community centres and styled as a tongue-in-cheek 'posh' 1940s afternoon tea with live performances by local artists from the queer community, volunteer waiters in black tie, vintage crockery, in-house pianists and lots of dancing. All Posh Clubs are ticketed at £5, including performances, drinks and snacks.

**Target audience and numbers:** The target audience for The Posh Club is older people, especially those from working class backgrounds, who worked in manual and/or caring professions. One of the intentions of The Posh Club is to 'care for the carers, because often these people would be the ones in their careers who would be serving other people'.<sup>47</sup> In 2018–2019, The Posh Club's live audiences totalled 8,712 over 80 events, and in 2019–2020, this number was 13,180 attendances at over 115 events.

**Audience recruitment process:** The Posh Club considers the choice of location to be fundamental to the project, actively seeking venues and spaces such as community centres and church halls, rather than arts venues, for their flexibility, affordability, and their lack of associated 'cultural baggage'. They especially work in collaboration with spaces that have close, existing relationships with working class and ethnically diverse communities.

Outreach involves activities ranging from standing outside Marks and Spencer in a fancy suit with a box of chocolates and personally inviting people to a party; through to distributing flyers. As potential Posh Club audiences may have limited desire to communicate through email or social media, initial invitations are followed up with individual phone calls to highlight the personal nature of the invitation. The Posh Club also works with care homes, day centres, churches and choirs, giving talks to introduce the events to their target audience of older people.

**Further activities to maintain engagement:** In collaboration with local community groups, The Posh Club's large network of volunteers befriend attendees for the event, ensuring that they are safely collected from their home to the venue, spending the afternoon with them and accompanying them back home.

<sup>47</sup> Simon Casson in discussion with Elyssa Livergant, London, 5 May 2021.



## Case study: Four Legs Good by Jack Tan, Compass Festival, Leeds 2018



Jack Tan, *Four Legs Good*, Compass Festival of Live Art. Photo by Claire Haigh, 2018.

*Four Legs Good* was a contemporary revival of the medieval animal trials which took place in Britain and throughout Europe, where animals who had been accused of committing crimes were brought to court, provided defence counsel and prosecuted before a judge. For Compass 2018, artist Jack Tan reimagined Leeds Town Hall as the site of a fictional Department of Animal Justice and staged a series of live 'moot' animal trials. Leeds Town Hall users encountered what appeared to be a working Animal Court evidenced by signage, court leaflets, legal heritage displays and a court website. This culminated in a day of live hearings where practising barristers/advocates argued claims brought by or against their animal clients. As with all Compass events, *Four Legs Good* was free to attend.

**Target audience and numbers:** As well as targeting members of the general public, Compass and the artist mapped communities of interest as part of the audience development process, identifying animal owners, lawyers, legal academics, students, animal welfare and environmental organisations as key constituents. The exhibition received an extremely positive response from the public and the courtroom was packed for the day of live trials and hearings, with over 1,000 people attending. For context, in 2018–19, live audiences for Compass' work including the 2018 festival were 13,297, with online audiences of 97,540.

**Audience recruitment process:** During his artist residency, the artist worked with Compass to determine which animals and issues would make a compelling mixture of cases. The search for animal owners gave Compass a context to connect with networks of special interest groups including the National Sheep Association, the Canal and River Trust, and a parliamentary working group with an interest in dangerous dogs.

In addition, Compass worked with barristers and judges in Leeds and London to disseminate information about the project through their professional networks, and legal media outlets. The artist hosted meetings and forums with law academics and students at Leeds University and Leeds Beckett University. The project was also profiled through festival channels including social media and the festival website.

**Further activities to maintain engagement:** The project allowed law students contact with professional solicitors and barristers, and some of the students secured professional development opportunities and internships through participating in the project. Student placements were used to further engage the legal communities at both universities.

The nature of the exhibition 'taking over' public spaces in Leeds Town Hall worked to generate conversation amongst staff, visitors and service users.



## Case study: a resistant body by Bhebhe&Davies for Artsadmin's Summer Intensive, London 2018

Artists Bhebhe&Davies (Nandi Bhebhe and Phoebe Davies) led Artsadmin's Summer Intensive working with a group of emerging artists over the course of a week. The project brought participants together to explore how bodies can occupy space in real life and online, examining a plurality of voices and experiences, acknowledging difference and power dynamics, collectivity and solidarity.

The group worked together with Bhebhe&Davies and Black Shuck (a moving image co-operative) to explore movement, sound and camera direction to develop a series of short online videos, concluding with a shared outcome for an invited audience.

Artsadmin's Summer Intensives provide a way for young people and artists to take part in a free, immersive learning experience in contemporary performance practice.

**Target audience and numbers:** The target audience for the Summer Intensive was a group of nine 16-25 year-olds primarily based in London. Artsadmin identified and brought together a range of participants who might not usually get involved in contemporary performance practices.

**Audience recruitment process:** Participants were recruited through face-to-face introductory workshops with the artists and producer at local and London-wide sixth form colleges. Further recruitment was undertaken via an online open call for participants. Young people were then invited to attend a taster session at Artsadmin's building, Toynbee Studios, undertaken over three hours with the artists and producer, so that they could find out more about the artists' approach. A core group of young people then went on to participate in the Summer Intensive.

**Further activities to maintain engagement:** Participants were encouraged to reflect on and share their experiences, with opportunities to contribute to blog posts, social media takeovers and Artsadmin's wider programme.

The three project case studies presented here illustrate a range of methods and strategies for audience development for projects working with Live Art. Both The Posh Club and the Artsadmin's Summer Intensive led by Bhebhe&Davies have clearly defined target demographics. Meanwhile, Jack Tan's *Four Legs Good* connected with specialist networks to reach communities interested in the project's themes, as well as successfully reaching general arts audiences. The Posh Club and *Four Legs Good* integrate audience development into the artistic conception

and delivery of the project. In all three cases, audience development work has involved detailed partnership working and extensive attention to marketing and communications through a range of channels to reach the target audiences.

Whilst many Live Art practices are presented on more conventional stages, these project case studies demonstrate working with non-traditional art spaces and institutions within local communities. By developing partnerships with community halls, a town hall and schools, these project case studies show how Live Art can connect with audiences and participants where they may already have existing relationships. Moreover, these case studies highlight that high levels of dialogue and collaboration between artists and organisations within and beyond the Live Art sector are often required in order to successfully bring Live Art practices to audiences.

## C. Young people

In her Study Room Guide for LADA on *Live Art and Kids*, Sibylle Peter writes, '[d]ue to the regime of health & safety and a general tendency towards over-protection in the middle classes, children today have less and less experience of running free. With this background Live Art practices may appear particularly daring and therefore attractive. They can provide a much-needed free space for kids and adults to learn how to take risks together'.<sup>48</sup> Although it is often assumed that Live Art is not suitable for young people, Peters outlines in her Study Room Guide how children may be avid audiences and makers of Live Art. There is a developing canon of Live Art centring young people that offers opportunity for intergenerational experience of Live Art.

Live Art with young people can entail rich partnerships between young people, artists and institutions – allowing institutions to develop relationships with young people in their communities, in turn making a key contribution to youth audience development. For instance, Tim Etchells's *That Night Follows Day* and Gob Squad's *Before Your Very Eyes* were part of a series of projects with children for adult audiences commissioned by CAMPO, a Ghent-based arts centre in Belgium.

Festivals are also key sites for Live Art with young people to take place – *Playing Up*, a Live Art game for kids and adults by Sibylle Peters (developed in collaboration between LADA, Theatre of Research, and Tate Early Years and Families programme) has been played at numerous events and festivals across the world. Haphazard by hÅb is unique in being a UK festival of Live Art for 'all ages'. Established in 2013, Haphazard is presented in partnership with Z-arts in Manchester, one of the UK's few arts centres dedicated to children and young people.

<sup>48</sup> Sibylle Peters, *Live Art and Kids*, Study Room Guide, London: Live Art Development Agency, 2017, p.15.

Young people also participate in Live Art projects and organisations as advisors – these structures may be part of a programme of creative work created and led by young people, as with the Artsadmin Youth Board, or may be complementary to an organisation’s governance structure, as with the young board members at Contact in Manchester. Contact continues to orient its programming and ways of working in conversation with young people. Contact’s openness to diversity of artform, its rethinking of traditional power and governance structures, coupled with its commitment to working with arts workers from ethnically diverse backgrounds, has encouraged and grown participation from young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, as audiences and artists of the future.

Through its engagement with young people as audience, co-creators, makers and advisors, the Live Art sector supports young people’s creative voices and the development of their creative potential, creating pathways for young people to develop careers in the cultural sector.

## D. Sectoral visibility: influence, archive and documentation

The documentation and historicisation of Live Art has been an important part of sectoral activity that supports contextualisation of Live Art practices within creative education and beyond. 63% of the 225 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals indicated that they had received significant reviews of their work in academic and non-academic publications (Q27, SurvInd). These processes of reviewing, documenting and archiving have been especially relevant to Live Art as a set of practices that are centred around the body, often ephemeral in nature, taking place outside conventional cultural spaces and sitting between artistic disciplines.

The Live Art Archives at Bristol University (including the National Review of Live Art, Franko B, Greenroom, and *Performance Magazine* archives) and the British Library Live Art Collection (including the Performance Matters<sup>49</sup> Archive 2009-2014 and archives of artists such as Neil Bartlett and Rose English) are resources of national and international importance that archive the legacy of Live Art practices for practitioners, students and researchers. Similarly, LADA’s Study Room (London) and Wales’s Culture Colony (online) also hold important resources for the sector. Moreover, archives serve as a valuable means to learn about and experience the multitude of practices that exist under the banner of Live Art. Publicly accessible collections and archives of Live Art raise the visibility of experimental, performance-centred practices for students and researchers, as well as the broader arts and culture sector.

<sup>49</sup> Performance Matters was a five-year creative research project on the cultural value of performance undertaken by LADA, University of Roehampton, and Goldsmiths University of London. Performance Matters was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

There are a range of contexts outside of archives and sector-focused activity where artists and organisations working with Live Art are referenced and documented. The increasing length of *The Live Art Almanac(s)*, collections of found writings about and around Live Art that were originally published elsewhere, is a reflection of the various and extensive ways that Live Art is now being written about.<sup>50</sup> Of the 225 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals, 63% have had their work referenced and quoted in mainstream media (Q29, SurvInd) and 70% have had their work referenced and quoted by creative and cultural institutions (Q28, SurvInd). The visibility of artists and organisations working with Live Art points to a growing interest in Live Art practices for audiences now and in the future.

## Key findings for Audiences and Influence

- Live Art in the UK has local, national and international reach, with clusters around London, the North West and Scotland, and in urban centres.
- Artists working with Live Art in the UK undertake hyperlocal activity.
- Collaboration and participation are key audience development strategies for artists and organisations working with Live Art.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art experiment with how young people can be equal collaborators in creative practices and processes.
- Practitioners working with Live Art value inter- and intra-regional networking and collaboration.
- The UK Live Art sector has supported the documentation and archiving of practices that have wider significance for contemporary art.

<sup>50</sup> *The Live Art Almanac* is published by the Live Art Development Agency, initiated in 2008 and now in its 6th iteration (an online edition). <https://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/the-live-art-almanac-volume-6/>



# Section Five: Demographics

***Live Art has been the only cultural space that has supported me explicitly as a neurodiverse migrant cultural worker.***

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

Here we present a snapshot of demographic data about 258 individuals working in the UK Live Art sector. Through our 2019 survey of individuals, we collected data on respondents' age, ethnicity, disability, and gender identity.<sup>51</sup> The survey data collected does not easily facilitate an intersectional approach<sup>52</sup> to data analysis. In other words, we are not able to identify how the protected characteristics of disability and gender are related and interdependent for a disabled woman.<sup>53</sup>

Our 2019 survey of individuals included a question on legal status (Q42, SurvInd). Guided by the valuable work that is currently being undertaken by activist groups including Unis Resist Borders, Migrants Organise and Migrants in Culture, our survey collected data on legal status in order to draw attention to the significant contribution of migrant labour within the UK's Live Art sector and the broader cultural sector, to recognise the legal complexities faced by migrants, and to help advocate for migrants' rights.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, we collected data on respondents' socio-economic backgrounds. The relationship between socio-economic background and access/participation in the arts has been a concern for artists and organisations working with Live Art,

51 We note the limits of this data – due to a flaw in survey design, survey results do not include data on sexual orientation.

52 The term 'intersectional' was conceived by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how race, gender, age, class, disability and aspects of identity overlap and 'intersect' to produce advantage and disadvantage.

53 Researchers working with student and staff equality data in higher education are providing useful guidelines for designing, collecting and analysing equality data from an intersectional perspective. See Ashlee Christoffersen, 'Intersectional approaches to equality research and data', London: Equality Challenge Unit, 2017, [https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/ecu/Research\\_and\\_data\\_briefing\\_2\\_Intersectional\\_approaches\\_to\\_equality\\_research\\_and\\_data\\_1579105654.pdf](https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/ecu/Research_and_data_briefing_2_Intersectional_approaches_to_equality_research_and_data_1579105654.pdf)

54 See Migrants in Culture, 'What is the Impact of the Hostile Environment on the Cultural Sector?', Research Report, 2019, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C9I\\_OpGYzn1X9-1aMZ76jFDIsj8TQLI/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C9I_OpGYzn1X9-1aMZ76jFDIsj8TQLI/view)

and in the arts and cultural sector more broadly.<sup>55</sup> Our 2019 survey of individuals asked respondents to identify the occupation of the main household earners (or primary caregivers) when they were aged 14 (Q44, SurvInd). This question helps us understand the socio-economic backgrounds of who works with/in Live Art, as is recommended by Jerwood Arts and the Bridge Group's 'Socio-Economic Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts: A Toolkit for Employers'.<sup>56</sup> From responses to this question, we found that occupations were varied and crossed all class indicators with regards to type of work, ranging from higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations; to intermediate occupations; small employers and self-employed; lower supervisory and technical occupations; semi-routine and routine occupations; the long-term unemployed and retired.<sup>57</sup>

In order to contextualise the demographics of individuals working with/in the UK's Live Art sector evidenced by our survey, we draw on a number of existing studies of workforce data, namely Creative Industries Federation 'Creative Diversity' report on the state of diversity in the UK's creative industries (2017), Creative and Cultural Skills' workforce analysis of England's creative sector (2018), and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport 'Sectors Economic Estimates' (2019).

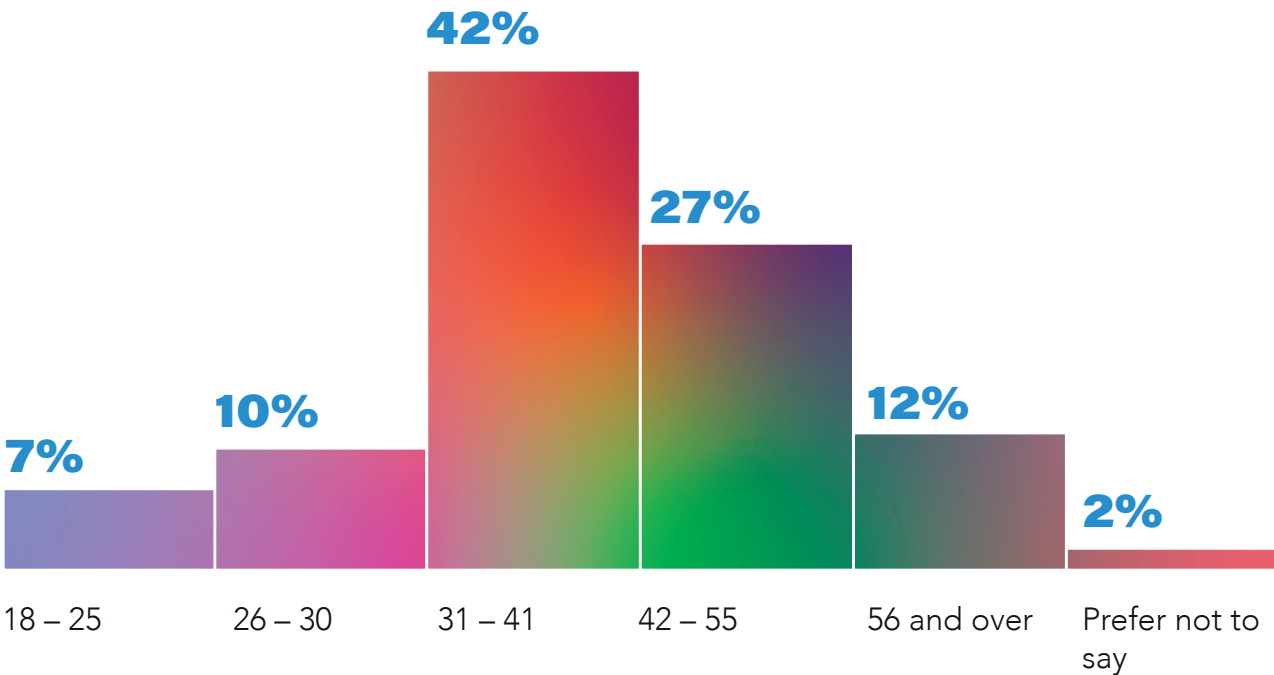
55 See Orian Brook, David O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, 'Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries', London: Create London and Arts Emergency, 2018, <https://createlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Panic-Social-Class-Taste-and-Inequalities-in-the-Creative-Industries1.pdf>

56 Jerwood Arts and the Bridge Group, 'Socio-Economic Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts: A Toolkit for Employers', London, 2019, <https://jerwoodarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Socio-economic-Diversity-and-Inclusion-in-the-Arts-A-Toolkit-for-Employers.pdf>

57 Ibid, p.40.

Age: The majority of respondents were more than 30 years old.

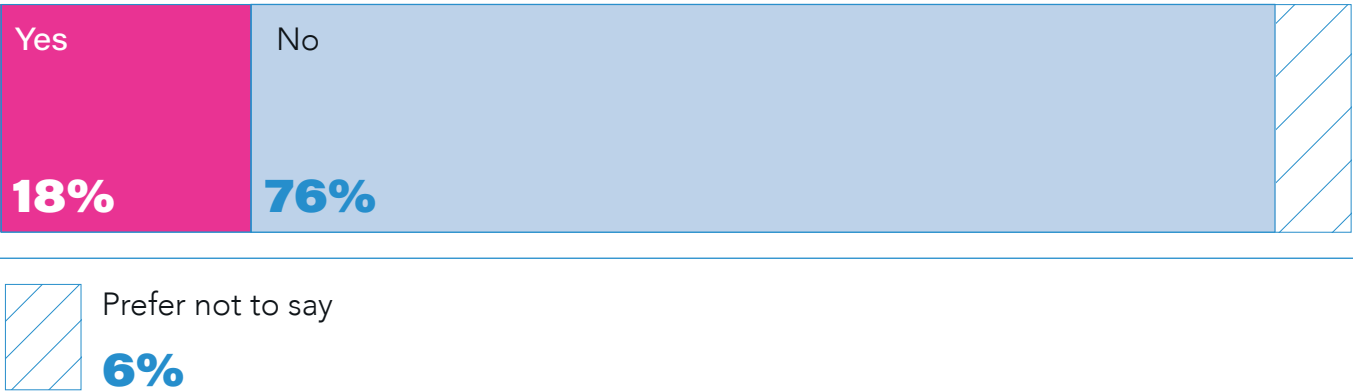
Q40. I belong to the age group:  
216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



Ethnicity: Responses indicate that the UK Live Art sector is more ethnically diverse than the broader UK creative workforce.

According to the 'Creative and Cultural Skills Workforce Analysis 2018', 12% of the UK workforce are from a 'BAME' (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) background and 9% of the UK's creative workforce are from a 'BAME' background.<sup>58</sup>

Q38. I identify as a person of colour/from a Black Asian Minority Ethnic background (BAME) – [We acknowledge the highly problematic categorisation system of self-identification at play here, which is often used by arts and cultural institutions]:  
216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



58 Creative and Cultural Skills, 'Workforce Analysis', 2018, <https://www.ccskills.org.uk/knowledge-centre/workforce-analysis>

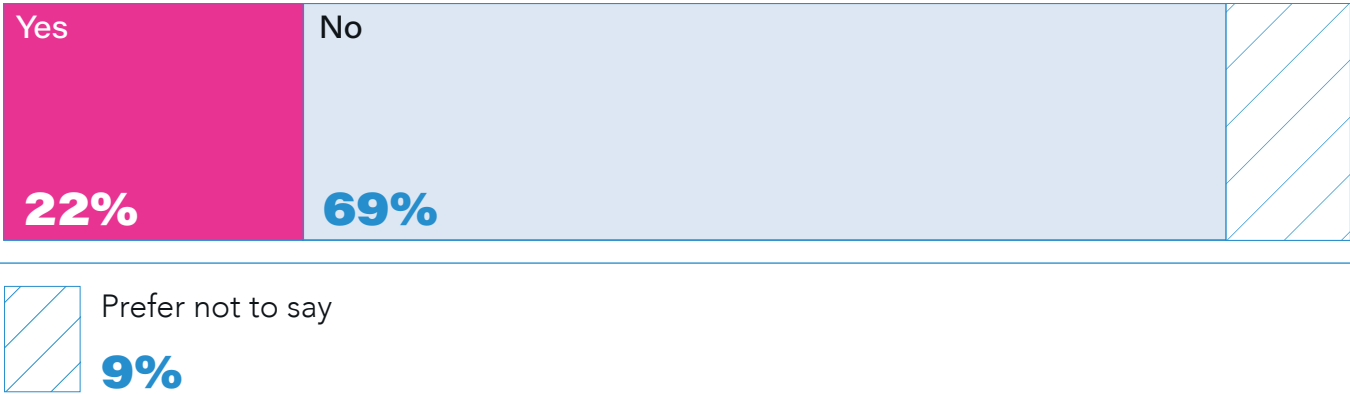


**Disability: Responses indicate there are higher numbers of disabled people in the UK Live Art sector than other areas of the UK's creative workforce.**

22% of respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals identify as disabled, whereas 12% of the UK's creative workforce identify as disabled.<sup>59</sup>

**Q39. I identify as a person with a disability [We acknowledge the highly problematic categorisation system of self-identification at play here. We adopt the social model of disability in our research]:**

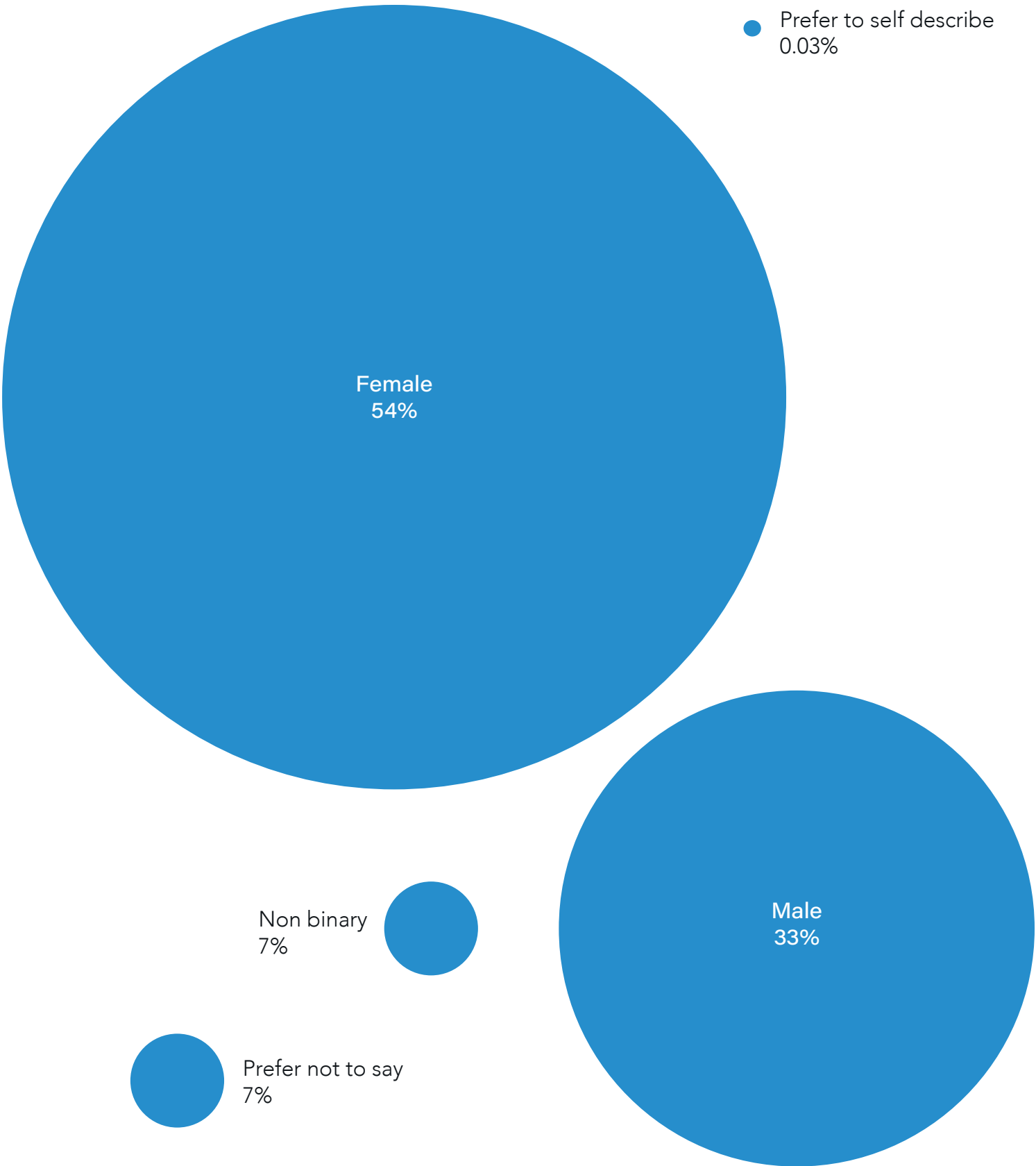
216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



**Gender: 54% of respondents are female.**

**Q41. I best describe my gender identity as:**

216 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



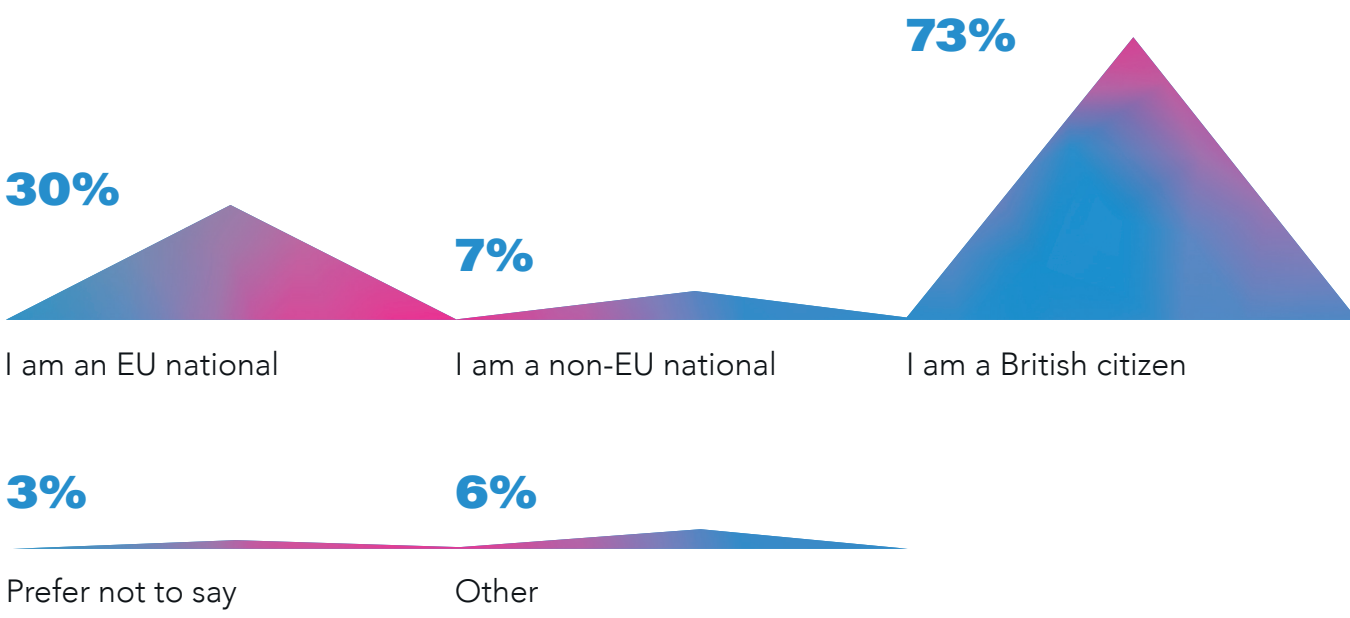
<sup>59</sup> Creative and Cultural Skills 'Workforce Analysis', 2018, <https://www.ccskills.org.uk/knowledge-centre/workforce-analysis>

**Legal Status: 30% of respondents identify as EU nationals.**

**Q42. Legal status [you can tick two that apply]:**

216 Answered

Source: Live Art research, 2019 survey of individuals



Respondents were able to tick up to two options for legal status, allowing opportunity for individuals to declare more than one nationality (Q42, SurvInd). We can understand this data as evidencing higher levels of non-UK nationals working with/in the Live Art sector (30%) than DCMS data on non-UK nationals working in the broader arts sector (11%).<sup>60</sup>

We note that this data was collected after the UK referendum to leave the European Union, but before the official exit date took place. Given the timing of our 2019 survey of individuals, responses to the question on legal status could also be interpreted as an expression of views about Brexit and national identity.

<sup>60</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Sectors Economic Estimates 2019: Employment', Office for National Statistics, London, April 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2019-employment/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2019-employment>

# Section Six: Diversity

## A. Contextualising diversity in Live Art

Live Art creates a space for the celebration, promotion, representation and development of diverse voices and bodies that is often at the forefront of innovative practices in queer culture, disability arts and issues of class and socio-economic background. Live Art profiles practices of artists from D/deaf and disabled, working class, LGBTQIA+ and Black, Asian and other Global Ethnic Majority communities – from the performance activism of Bobby Baker that addresses mental health, age and gender, to Travis Alabanza's 2019 performance *Burgerz*, which explores how trans bodies navigate often hostile public spaces in contemporary UK.

Live Art has provided a space for artists to express, think through and challenge normative understandings of sexuality and gender identity, with the development of a rich ecology of Live Art organisations, festivals and initiatives – such as Duckie, Queer Up North, Homotopia, Cuntemporary and Thorny – supporting artists and practitioners working with Live Art. Moreover, artists and practitioners working with Live Art have made considerable contributions to the representation of trans artists within the UK arts and cultural sector: for instance, Emma Frankland's *We Dig* performance project, which featured a changing company of trans femmes that formed part of the demolition process of the Ovalhouse building, and Marikiscrycry's choreographic work, which has received international acclaim.

Live Art has also contributed to conversations about ageing and intergenerational politics, raising questions about how older people are valued within UK society, and examining what it means to be an older artist. The artist Lois Weaver's project *What Tammy Needs to Know about Getting Old and Having Sex*, for example, is part-performance and part-participatory project working with people over sixty. The intersectional approach at the heart of this project investigates the continuities between ageing, disability and care in relation to queerness for people who exist outside dominant family structures.

The understanding of diversity that is deployed in this research draws on the UK Equality Act 2010 framework of nine protected characteristics.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the most important current framework for understanding diversity within the UK arts and

<sup>61</sup> According to the Equality Act 2010, the nine protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. See Equality Act 2010, part 2, c.1. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/1>



cultural sector is Arts Council England's 'Creative Case for Diversity'. Launched in 2011 and refreshed in 2015, the 'Creative Case for Diversity' aims to go beyond compliance with equalities legislation, requiring that arts and culture activities and projects in England reflect the diversity of society and local communities. As part of this approach, Arts Council England increased financial support for diverse cultural production through programmes including Elevate, Changemakers and Transforming Leadership, which aimed to increase levels of artistic activity by diverse artists and makers.

Following the murder of George Floyd and the consequent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement across the globe in Summer 2020, Arts Council England made a statement<sup>62</sup> acknowledging the limited impact of the 'Creative Case for Diversity' in developing an inclusive arts workforce in England, specifically, in relation to ethnically diverse communities.<sup>63</sup>

The lack of a diverse workforce in the arts and cultural sector is a result of historic framing within UK arts policy where diverse-led organisations and 'culturally specific' arts initiatives were evaluated according to white, cis-gendered, middle-class, non-disabled mainstream narratives. This contributed to funding cuts and deteriorating support for diverse-led organisations, and as such there has been a historic lack of investment and capacity building of a diverse workforce. The history of diversity in Live Art organisations is, in part, reflective of this complex and often politicised history of funding.

This section of our report outlines how the UK Live Art sector has approached issues of equality and diversity, especially in relation to disability, race and ethnicity, areas which Arts Council England recognises require further attention and future development.

62 Darren Henley, 'Black Lives Matter', Arts Council England, June 2020, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/black-lives-matter>

63 Moving forward Arts Council England aims to more directly address issues of diversity in workforce, leadership and governance through the roll out of its new strategy Let's Create. This positions Inclusivity and Relevance as one of four central investment principles, and places a greater responsibility on funded organisations to develop workforce, leadership and governance that reflect and represent the communities they are serving.

## B. Live Art and disability

Our approach to disability in this research is shaped and informed by the social model of disability, developed by disabled activists, particularly the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation in the UK in the 1970s. In contrast to the medical model of disability, which prioritises cure or treatment by medical professionals, the social model of disability focuses on individuals self-identifying as disabled,<sup>64</sup> emphasising the collective, societal responsibility to remove the barriers and exclusion that disabled people face. In other words, a person might be visually impaired, and therefore disabled by a society that puts sight at the heart of understanding and being in the world.

Our 2019 survey of individuals in the Live Art sector found that of the 216 responses to the question 'I identify as a person with a disability' (Q39, SurvInd), 22% of respondents identified as disabled, which is higher than both the percentage of the UK workforce who identify as disabled (13%) and considerably higher than the percentage of the UK's creative workforce who identify as disabled (12%) according to the Creative and Cultural Skills 'Workforce Analysis'.<sup>65</sup> This data demonstrates that disabled practitioners are well represented in the UK's Live Art sector. However, it is important to note that disabled people in the UK are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people.<sup>66</sup>

A brief examination of UK disability arts history illustrates that D/deaf and disabled artists and arts practitioners have historically been underserved, underrepresented and have faced discrimination.<sup>67</sup> As recently as 1989, the Arts Council of Great Britain<sup>68</sup> applied for exemption from employment quotas for disabled people within its own workforce. Whilst key organisations such as Shape Arts and Graeae Theatre have continually pushed the boundaries of art by D/deaf and disabled communities and challenged the status quo since the 1980s, most of the artistic activity by D/deaf and disabled communities has stood outside of mainstream funded arts practice.

Further, art by disabled practitioners has historically been assessed by people without lived experience, according to frameworks that centre non-disabled people.

64 Defined under the Equality Act 2010 as a person with a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on the ability to carry out normal daily activities. Equality Act 2010, part 2, c.1., <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/1>

65 Creative and Cultural Skills 'Workforce Analysis', 2018, <https://www.ccskills.org.uk/knowledge-centre/workforce-analysis>

66 Scope, 'Disability Facts and Figures', 2020, <https://www.scope.org.uk/media/disability-facts-figures/>

67 See Allan Sutherland's extraordinarily detailed timeline of the disability arts movement in the UK. Allan Sutherland, 'Chronology of Disability Arts, 1977 – 2017', NDACA, 2020, <https://the-ndaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Allan-Sutherland-Chronology.pdf>

68 The Arts Council of Great Britain was replaced with National Arts Councils and National Lottery in 1994. Arts Council of England and the 10 regional arts boards merged in 2002, and in 2003 the new organisation was named Arts Council England. See <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-organisation/our-history>

As an artform and discipline that critically examines identity and representation, initiatives and organisations in the UK Live Art sector have profiled D/deaf and disabled artists working with Live Art and devised initiatives that explore disability at a number of junctures. Notable amongst these are the second edition of Live Art Development Agency's (LADA) project Restock, Rethink, Reflect on Live Art and Disability (2009–12), which featured a DIY professional development project, a Study Room Guide on disability and artistic models, and a two-day public programme in March 2011, *Access All Areas* (including performances, installations and screenings by disabled artists such as Noemi Lakmaier and Martin O'Brien), a landmark symposium, and an accompanying publication. Commenting on the *Access All Areas* programme and publication, Dr Paul Darke of Outside Centre described Live Art as, 'truly the avant-garde forum for Disability Art and at the forefront of Disability Art practice, thinking and theory.'<sup>69</sup>

Cultural funding associated with the London 2012 Olympics has provided support for D/deaf and disabled practitioners making Live Art – including The Disabled Avant Garde's infamous *Bad Mascots* at the M21 Live Art Festival at Disability Arts in Shropshire (DASH), which was part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Moreover, artists working with Live Art such as Rhiannon Armstrong and Nwando Ebizie have been supported by the world's foremost disability arts commissioning programme, Unlimited.<sup>70</sup>

Live Art's nuanced concern with bodies has offered D/deaf and disabled artists a valuable frame for their work and informed the landscape of disability arts today. Initiatives and practitioners who have received support from Unlimited include Jo Bannon's visceral ode to contemporary feminism *We are Fucked* and Tarik Elmoutawakil's curatorial project *Brownton Abbey*, an Afro-Futuristic Space-Church performance party that centres queer people of colour, especially D/deaf and disabled people. The significant contributions of D/deaf and disabled artists working with Live Art have also been acknowledged by trusts and foundations, with artists such as the vacuum cleaner being awarded the prestigious multi-year Breakthrough Fund grant by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2018.

Over the years, organisations with infrastructural interest in Live Art have also worked with disabled-led arts organisations such as the well-established DaDaFest, with Liverpool's the Bluecoat hosting the festival and co-presentations of work with Spill Festival. Live Art as a fertile ground for the investigation of illness and disability, has more recently led to the development of Live Art festivals with a particular focus on deaf and disabled practitioners and mental health, including Sick! Festival (operating since 2013) and Sick of the Fringe/ Something To Aim For (established in 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Lois Keidan and CJ Mitchell (eds), *Access All Areas: Live Art and Disability*, London: LADA, 2012, back cover.

## C. Live Art, race and ethnicity

The term 'diversity' has often been used euphemistically in arts policy as a reference to visible protected characteristics. This section consciously takes up the term's veiled references to race and ethnicity in relation to UK arts policy, in order to unpack, challenge and offer insights into narratives of practitioners from ethnically diverse backgrounds who work with Live Art in relation to other protected characteristics.



Keijaun Thomas, *My Last American Dollar*, Fierce Festival. Photo by Manuel Vason, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Unlimited has received significant funding from the British Council and UK arts councils. Being co-delivered by Shape Arts and Artsadmin since 2013, at time of writing, Unlimited is in the process of transitioning to become an independent organisation.



## Histories, visibilities and archiving

In his seminal report from 1990, 'Cultural Grounding: Live Art and Cultural Diversity', Michael McMillan wrote, 'Live Art operates on the margins of the visual arts, because of its "avant-garde" and ephemeral nature. Yet dominant definitions of performance are Eurocentric and exclude many Afro-Asian (Black) artists'.<sup>71</sup> The report was written in the context of the rise of the UK Black Arts movement.<sup>72</sup> McMillan's insights keenly influenced the analysis and recommendations about diversity featured in the report 'National Arts and Media Strategy: Discussion Document on Live Art'<sup>73</sup> written by Lois Keidan in her role as Live Art officer for the then Arts Council of Great Britain, and continues to inform contemporary understandings of diversity in Live Art.

In my academic and curatorial work, I identify more with the term 'performance art'. The reason for this is that I work with/on international/diasporic artists (mainly from South and Southeast Asia) in the UK and Europe, whose practices/artistic backgrounds don't always identify with the term 'Live Art'.

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

Whilst many artists from ethnically diverse backgrounds have embraced the term and context of Live Art, others who use methods and strategies of Live Art choose not to identify as working with Live Art. A number of factors contribute to the term 'Live Art' having less currency for ethnically diverse artists and practitioners, including the power to define, present and promote Live Art being shaped by white-majority organisations, the continued whiteness of academia, and institutional racism in the performing arts.<sup>74</sup> Hence, many legacies of ethnically diverse arts workers within Live Art, and the UK's cultural history as a whole, remain sadly neglected and under-articulated.

71 Michael McMillan, 'Cultural Grounding: Live Art and Cultural Diversity – Action Research Project', A Report for the Visual Arts Department of the Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1990, p.4.

72 At the same time, the hugely influential group exhibition of 'Afro-Asian artists' curated by Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story* (1989) opened, which featured artists working with Live Art and performance, including David Medalla and Sonia Boyce.

73 Lois Keidan, 'National Arts and Media Strategy: Discussion Document on Live Art', Number 26, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1991.

74 See Stuart Brown, Isobel Hawson, Tony Graves, and Mukesh Barot, 'Eclipse Report: Developing Strategies to Combat Racism in Theatre', an Arts Council of England, East Midlands Arts Board, Theatrical Management Association and Nottingham Playhouse initiative, 12–13 June 2001, [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Eclipse\\_report\\_2011.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Eclipse_report_2011.pdf). For an overview of Arts Council England's strategic initiatives in the arena of race equality from 1980s to late 2000s, see Will Hammonds and Lakhbir Bhandal, 'Where to Next for Diversity? An Assessment of Arts Council England's Race Equality and Cultural Diversity Policies and Emerging Trends', *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 3, no.2 (2011), pp.187–200.

## The politics of diversity initiatives

A notable exploration of Live Art and race was LADA's first edition of *Rethink, Reflect* (2006), which involved professional development, events and publication of the resource *Documenting Live*, developed with curator David A Bailey and artist Rajni Shah.

Given the unequal distribution of consciousness about diversity across the regions of the UK, it is important to note that these activities have taken place within metropolitan contexts. Our research conversations and survey data find that in rural or non-urban locations, arts organisations have often viewed work that sits outside white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able-normative frames as financially and artistically 'risky'. The scarcity of opportunities for artists working with Live Art is doubly exacerbated by programmers and audiences who may shy away from experimental work and multiplies the marginalisation of ethnically diverse artists, especially those who also face barriers of class and disability.

Our 2019 survey of individuals found that of the 216 people who answered as to whether or not they identify as a person of colour/from a Black, Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) background, 40 answered yes, 164 answered no, and twelve preferred not to say (they have been removed from the analysis) (Q38, SurvInd). The results translate to 18% of respondents identifying as from ethnically diverse backgrounds. According to the 'Creative and Cultural Skills Workforce Analysis 2018', 12% of the UK workforce are from a 'BAME' background and 9% of the UK's creative workforce are from a 'BAME' background.<sup>75</sup> Importantly, the Creative Industries Federation's 'Creative Diversity Report' shows that in order for the creative industries in the UK to be diverse in proportion to population, 17.8% of the workforce would have to be BAME.<sup>76</sup> By way of context, the 'Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2019-20' from the Arts Council of England shows us that 13% of the total National Portfolio Organisations workforce identify as 'BME'.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, we can argue that the Live Art sector is diverse in proportion to population diversity, and does better than the creative and cultural industries, as a whole, which has a significantly lower BAME representation. We note that our 2019 survey of individuals was undertaken towards the end of Diverse Actions (2017-20), a major Live Art UK initiative championing 'culturally diverse (Black Minority Ethnic) ambition, excellence and talent in Live Art'.

75 Creative and Cultural Skills, 'Workforce Analysis', 2018, <https://www.ccskills.org.uk/knowledge-centre/workforce-analysis>

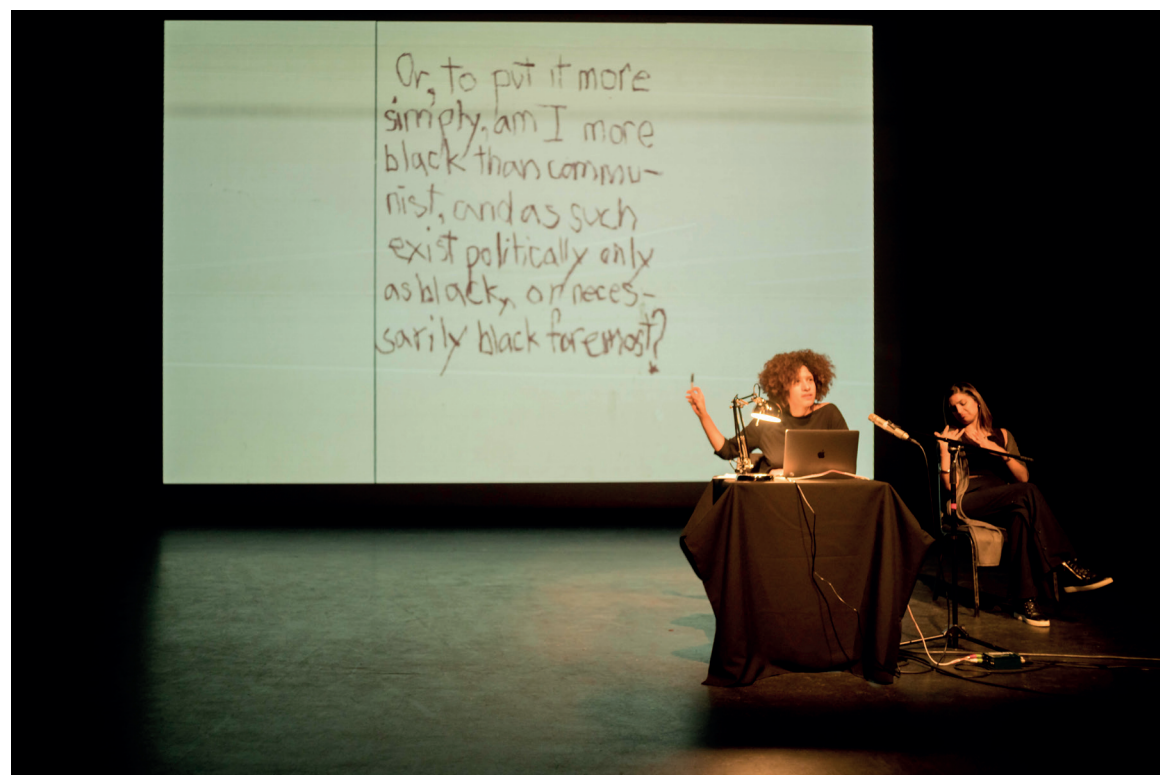
76 Creative Industries Federation, 'Creative Diversity – The State of Diversity in the UK's Creative Industries and What We Can Do About It', September 2015, [https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet\\_A4\\_Web%20\(1\)\(1\).pdf](https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/sites/default/files/2017-06/30183-CIF%20Access%20&%20Diversity%20Booklet_A4_Web%20(1)(1).pdf)

77 Arts Council England, 'Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2019-20', 2021, p.11, [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Equality\\_Diversity\\_and\\_the\\_Creative\\_Case\\_A\\_Data\\_Report\\_\\_201920.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Equality_Diversity_and_the_Creative_Case_A_Data_Report__201920.pdf)

## Diverse Actions

Supported by an Arts Council England Ambition for Excellence award of £500,000, Diverse Actions was the largest project of the Live Art UK network to date and the most significant UK project with a specific focus on diversity and Live Art. Consisting of thirty-two commissions, seventeen professional development bursaries (coordinated by Artsadmin and LADA), six leadership bursaries (coordinated by LADA), a symposium and publication, and involving twenty organisations across the regions and nations of the UK, Diverse Actions was led by a steering group and coordinated by project managers based at the project's host organisation, Cambridge Junction.<sup>78</sup>

Diverse Actions' successes included introducing new voices to the Live Art sector, broadening artist networks and supporting the development of a considerable number of artists and practitioners of colour through the project's different strands.



Season Butler, *Happiness Forgets*, SKIN in the GAME, Diverse Actions. Photo by Chan-Yang Kim, 2019.

The professional development projects – particularly the DIY programme of professional development for artists by artists, coordinated by LADA – enabled ethnically diverse artists and practitioners working with Live Art to gather, develop mutual support and cultivate exciting practices. Notable examples of this were Ria Hartley and Ana de Matos' exploration of virtual reality and intimate performance; sorryyoufeeluncomfortable's encounter with Black

histories, presents and futures in Glasgow. Similarly, the visibility and financial support of the leadership bursaries has allowed recipients – such as artist, writer and dramaturg Season Butler, and producer and cultural organiser Joon Lynn Goh – to develop and approach their practice strategically, expanding their profile and reach.

Moreover, Diverse Actions has boosted the commissioning and presentation of Live Art by artists and practitioners from ethnically diverse backgrounds across the UK regions and nations. Through more than forty associated public events, with an approximate audience of 37,000 (not including online audiences), Diverse Actions has enhanced the touring network for both Live Art and performance, and work by ethnically diverse artists. Several of the artists who were commissioned through the Diverse Actions New Works strand have gone on to attract extensive touring opportunities, including Rachael Young's *Nightclubbing*, which was nominated for the 2019 Total Theatre Award for Innovation, Experimentation & Playing with Form.

At the same time, Diverse Action's project organising structure and the almost exclusively white-led organisations participating in the project, highlighted the systemic inequality faced by artists and practitioners from ethnically diverse backgrounds who work with Live Art and the arts and cultural sector more broadly. Whilst the project's steering group and project managers were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, project funding was held by white directorate at Cambridge Junction. Due to the structure of the project, programming decisions were made by predominantly white staff at Live Art UK organisations. This contributed to a perception by some in the sector of white gatekeeping that was at odds with the principles of the project, a point highlighted at our audience engagement activity in 2019, the Diverse Actions-organised *Skin in the Game* symposium. Indeed, Diverse Actions foregrounded structural issues around progression, leadership and a lack of ethnically diverse workforce at senior and directorate-level in the UK Live Art sector.

## Key findings for Diversity

- Individuals participating in the UK Live Art sector are diverse in relation to ethnicity, race and disability, and the sector does better than the creative and cultural industries as a whole.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art and queer culture have been particularly prominent in the UK Live Art sector.
- Live Art practice and disability arts have informed and exerted significant influence on one another.
- Historically, the UK Live Art sector has not supported ethnically diverse leadership.
- The UK Live Art sector supports artistic practices that contribute to discourse and intersectional, holistic approaches to addressing equity, access and inclusion.

<sup>78</sup> Live Art UK archive, held by Live Art Development Agency. 'Diverse Actions (2017-2020), Evaluation Report', Live Art UK, 2020.



# Section Seven: Sustaining and Organising

***There is an assumption that Live Art costs less.***

– Focus group participant, 2019

In this section, we examine the ways organisations and individuals working in the Live Art sector are organised and funded, the working conditions within the sector and other forms of labour that sustain the sector as a whole. We place these issues within the wider economic and labour conditions of the arts and cultural work. We will then look at data from organisations and individuals about their activities prior to March 2020.



hancock & kelly, *UNION (Part IV: The Gilded Cage)*, WAKE Festival, [performance space]. Photo by Paul Samuel White, 2017.

Research into resilience and sustainability in the arts sector commissioned by Arts Council England in 2018 deemed individual resilience beyond the scope of the project.<sup>79</sup> While it focused instead on organisational survival, the research noted that issues relating to individual wellbeing were repeatedly raised by people working in the arts and should be central to grasping a more holistic, systems view of arts sector resilience. The report explains,

A systems view of resilience requires an understanding of the number of individual artists and creatives who contribute to a diverse and thriving sector while freelancers or self-employed – as well as the fact that many small organisations fundamentally serve as funding vehicles for individual artists or creatives.<sup>80</sup>

The report goes on to cite the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Sectors Economic Estimates 2017 report 'Employment', which found that 49% of jobs in the cultural sector were self-employed, compared to only 16.3% of UK jobs overall.<sup>81</sup>

The UK Live Art sector echoes wider trends within the arts and cultural sector where issues of individual and organisational wellbeing and sector resilience intersect. Through our research consultations, qualitative responses to our 2019 survey of individuals, and 2021 organisational questionnaire, we note that across organisations and individuals, the challenge of being under-resourced due to disinvestment in the arts by public bodies has been met by the sector through partnership working and attempts to generate income through alternative sources (including ticket sales, consultancy services, sales of physical artworks and documentation). However, we also note troubling and dangerous practices of over-production by those working in the sector. Increasingly competitive conditions, fear of losing out on funding or future work often appears to be met by those working in the sector over-promising on what can be delivered. This has negative impacts on individual, organisational and sectoral wellbeing.

Much like the wider arts and cultural sector, annual income in the UK Live Art sector is considerably lower than national average incomes. Based on the data from our 2021 organisational questionnaire, the average daily rate for project-based workers is £169, lower than the suggested daily rate indicated by the Artists' Union of England of £175.13 for recent graduates.<sup>82</sup> The annual salary for core workers in organisations working in Live Art, based on data supplied by organisations to our questionnaire, ranged from nothing to £40,000, with the majority below £25,000.

<sup>79</sup> Sophia Woodley, Patrick Towell, Richard Turpin, Sarah Thelwall, and Philippe Schneider 'What is Resilience Anyway?' in Golant Media Ventures and the Audience Agency's Report commissioned by Arts Council England, July 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. pp.10-11.

<sup>81</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 'Sectors Economic Estimates 2017: Employment', London, July 2018, p.19, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/726136/DCMS\\_Sectors\\_Economic\\_Estimates\\_2017\\_Employment\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/726136/DCMS_Sectors_Economic_Estimates_2017_Employment_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Artists' Union England, 'Rates of Pay', April 2021, <https://www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/rates-of-pay/>

Working in a Live Art organisation includes those working on freelance, fixed term or permanent contracts, on either a part-time or full-time basis. Due to the structure of funding which tends to focus on fixed-term projects, a considerable proportion of roles within the Live Art sector (and the broader arts and cultural sector) are on a freelance, fractional or fixed-term basis. This offers potential flexibility for artists and makers who wish to structure their working time to take up creative development opportunities, however, these types of contracts tend to reinforce labour and income precarity.

Recent studies of the theatre workforce have not included data on total annual income, however, the Society of London Theatre’s ‘Theatre Workforce Review’, conducted by Nordicity,<sup>83</sup> found that low pay in off-stage roles was the most frequently cited reason why people might leave the theatre sector. The Theatre Workforce Review also noted both a preponderance of freelancers within the theatre sector and low freelance pay.<sup>84</sup> That the Equity/ITC Ethical Manager Agreement in February 2020<sup>85</sup> sets an agreed daily rate at £100, a 24% increase on the previous informal day rate of £80.50, reflects the high rate of unpaid and underpaid labour that takes place within the theatre sector.

In 2018, the TBR report ‘Livelihoods of Visual Artists: 2016 Data Report’, surveying 2007 respondents and representing the largest survey of artists undertaken in England, found that ‘the mean average total income for artists across England in 2015 was £16,500’.<sup>86</sup> This is considerably lower than the average wage in the UK in 2015, which was £27,600, as collated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). As noted in the upcoming section on organisations, ONS reports annual average wage in the UK as of 2019–20 is £31,461.<sup>87</sup>

### A. Individuals

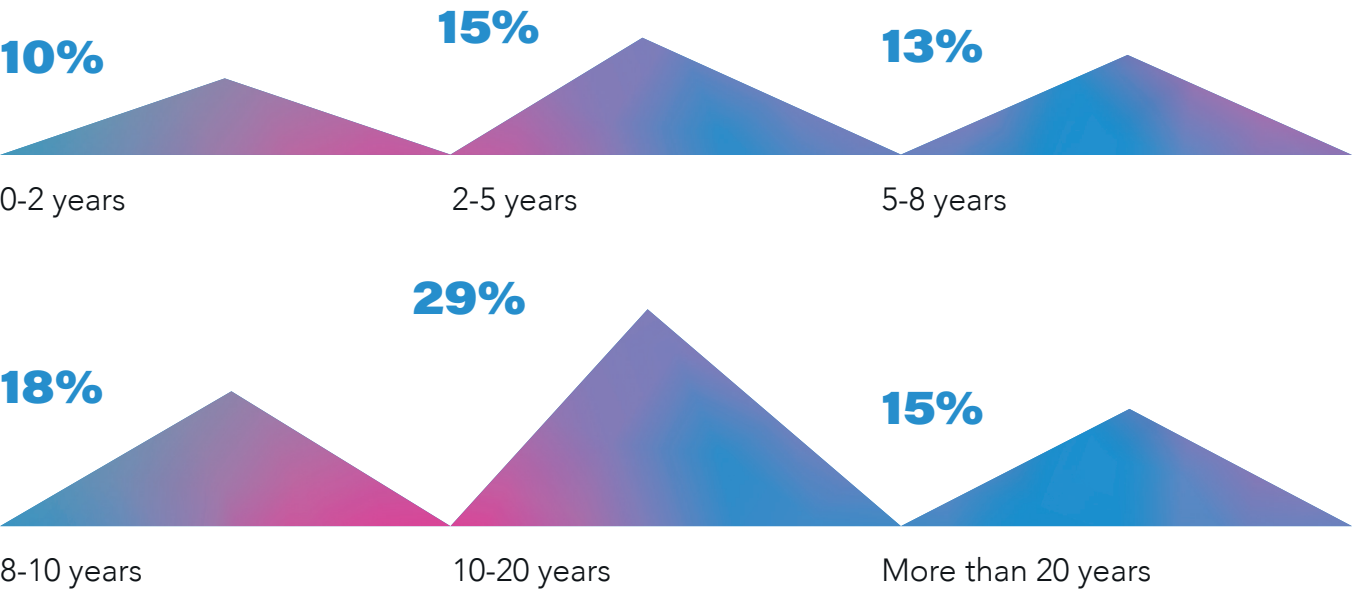
Practitioners within the Live Art sector do multiple types of work, including working as artists, producers, programmers, researchers, educators or professionals working in areas such as marketing and project administration.

Of the 258 respondents who answered our 2019 survey of individuals in relation to length of time in the Live Art sector, 26% had been working less than 5 years, 31% between 5 and 10 years, and 44% have been working for 10 years or more (Q5, SurvInd):

### Q5. I have worked with/in Live Art for:

258 Answered

Source: Live Art Research, 2019 Survey of Individuals



Of the 258 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals, 32% made over half of their annual income from Live Art in the last 5 years while 65% did not and 3% of respondents preferred not to say (Q7, SurvInd).

I am mostly able to make my performance work because of the funding support I have received as a researcher through higher education institutions and research council funding. Without this, I would not make enough money to be able to make work.

– Respondent, 2019 survey of individuals

83 Nordicity and Alistair Smith, ‘Workforce Review of the UK Offstage Theatre and Performing Arts Sector,’ London: UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre, June 2017, p.54, <https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/guidance-reports-and-resources/theatre-workforce/>

84 Ibid., p.60.

85 Equity, ‘A New Deal for the Independent Sector’, February 2020, <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/february/a-new-deal-for-the-independent-sector/>

86 TBR, 2018, p.10.

87 Office of National Statistics, ‘Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2015 Provisional Results’, November 2015, Section 1, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2015provisionalresults>; Office of National Statistics, ‘Employee Earnings in the UK: 2020. Measures of employee earnings, using data from the Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE)’, April 2020, Section 2, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2020>



In relation to how people made their income, of the 258 respondents to our survey 24% made their incomes through working as an artist, while a slightly higher proportion of respondents (26%) were employees of organisations (including higher education) (Q8, SurvInd). As we have noted in the section on higher education, there is a considerable crossover between practitioners working with Live Art and working in higher education. 14% of respondents made their income as a freelance arts professional. Through our research consultations, we have noted that a mixture of income sources for those working in the sector, also known as a 'portfolio' career, has been a common feature of the parallel roles people play in the sector.

**Q8. Thinking about your answer to the previous question, indicate how you have made this income:**

258 Answered

Source: Live Art Research, 2019 Survey of Individuals

**24%**

As an artist

**25%**

As an employee of an organisation (including higher education)

**14%**

As an independent / freelance arts professional

**29%**

A combination of some or all of above

**8%**

Other

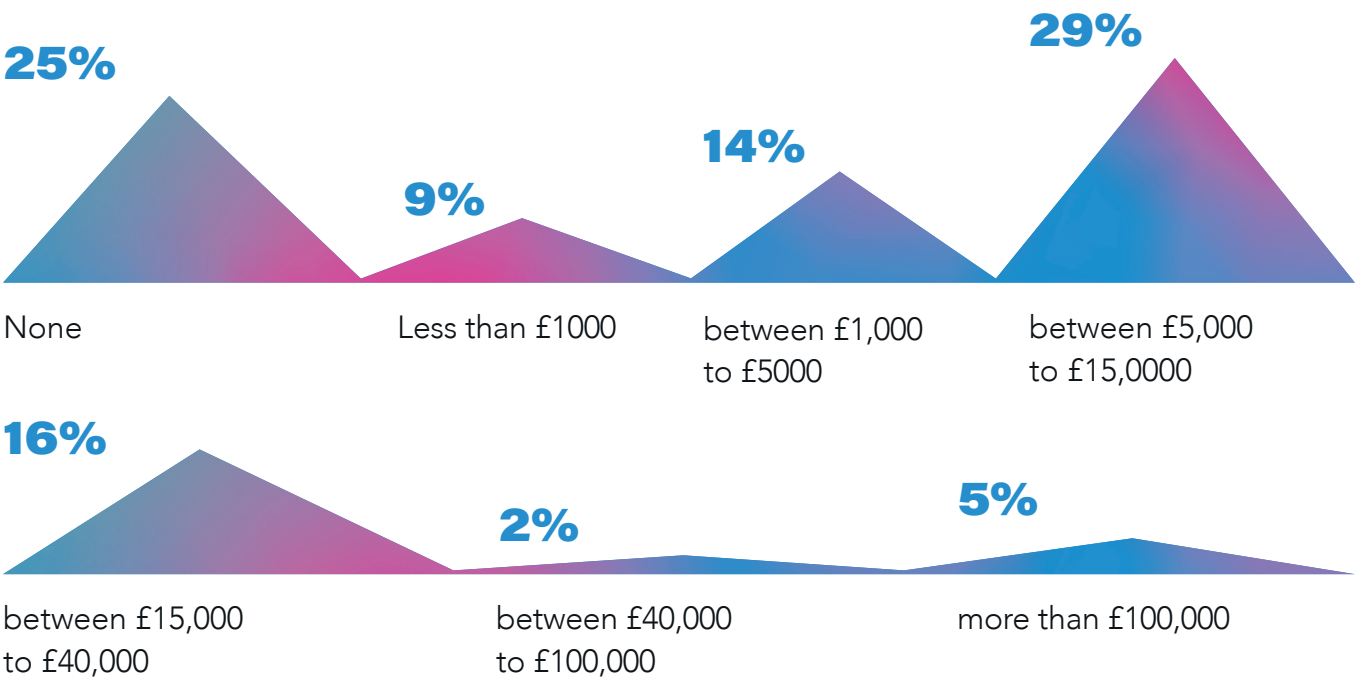
Individuals within Live Art receive support through grants, development funds and commissions. Although the number of trusts, foundations and funding bodies offering direct funds to individuals is limited, schemes for individual practitioners include the UK's national Arts Councils, for example, Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants awards for practitioners in England. Other notable schemes include Jerwood Arts' awards focusing on practitioners at a pivotal point in their development, and Paul Hamlyn Foundation's Ideas and Pioneers fund.

In our 2019 survey of individuals, 221 responses identified the average amount of funding awarded in the last 5 years per grant (Q33, SurvInd). Respondents were offered several monetary bands to choose from. The largest percentage (29%) of responses were allocated to the £5,000-£15,000 band, followed by 25% of respondents who had been in receipt of no grant funding.

**Q33. In the last 5 years, the average amount of funding I have received per grant is:**

221 Answered

Source: Live Art Research, 2019 Survey of Individuals



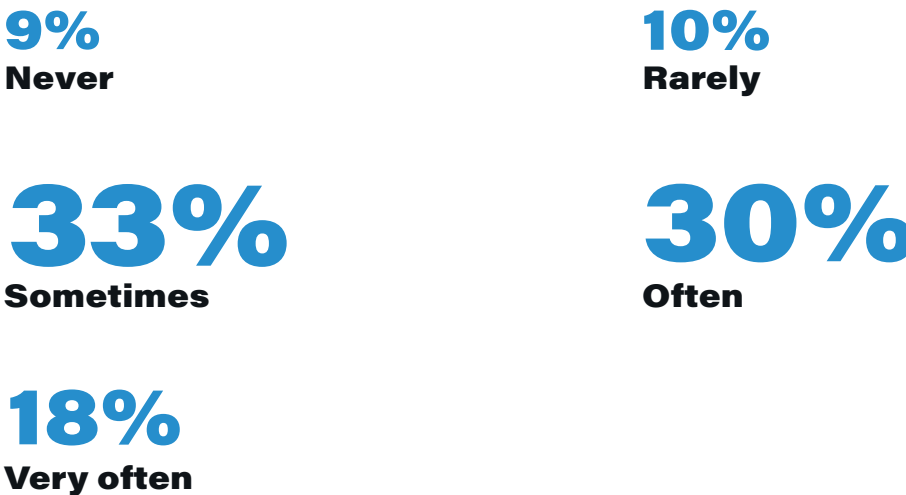
Further contextual data from Arts Council England shows us that from April 2019 until March 2020, of the 176 successful Project Grant applications from individuals and organisations to Arts Council England that included the key word 'Live Art' or 'Performance Art' in the application project title, applicant name or project description and/or related sub-classifiers 'Disciplinary type – Visual Arts-Live & Performance Art' or 'sub art form – Visual Art-Live Art', 102 of these were for under £15,000. The figure of £15,000 is the maximum amount that can be applied for on the lower band of Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants.

***There is never enough funding. This breaks relationships, through difficulties in production, due to hierarchies.***

– Focus group participant, 2019

Through our research consultation findings, such as the previous quotation, there is a large amount of unpaid and underpaid labour within the UK Live Art sector. Focus groups have reiterated the increasing competition for arts funding, affecting individuals and organisations across the Live Art sector and the cultural sector as a whole. For individual practitioners, this pressure on funding has often resulted in fees from commissions and presentations that do not reflect recommended daily rates, or that have not risen in line with inflation. At the same time, we note that the UK Live Art sector is marked by a prevalence of peer support and community goodwill. Our 2019 survey of individuals found that 81% of the 221 respondents to our survey question on contributions of non-financial support to the sector report that they support the Live Art sector sometimes, often or very often (Q35, SurvInd).

**Q35. I contribute non-financial support to the Live Art sector:**  
221 Answered  
Source: Live Art Research, 2019 Survey of Individuals



When asked to identify the kinds of non-financial support offered by individuals in the sector, 220 respondents described a range of unpaid activities, with 49% (107) of respondents identifying mentoring as an unpaid activity; as well as marketing and PR 18% (39); giving feedback, crits and advice 17%(38); and producing 11% (25) (Q36, SurvInd). Other non-financial support activities individuals contributed to the Live Art sector include: professional and technical services such as installation of artwork, dramaturgy, curating, and writing letters of support for peers. Survey respondents also identified offering welfare support to peers including offering food, space, accommodation, childcare, emotional support and access support.

In addition to subsidising the sector with their unpaid labour, 58% of 221 respondents to our 2019 survey of individuals sometimes or often contribute to fundraising initiatives to support the sector (Q34, SurvInd).

## B. Organisations

A total of twenty-two organisations/groups working across the UK Live Art sector responded to our 2021 organisational questionnaire. As this is the first piece of research of its kind, it is difficult to establish whether the sample of twenty-two organisations is representative of UK organisations who see working with Live Art as core to their work. For reference, the Live Art UK network consists of thirty organisations and respondents included organisations outside this network.

By way of context, seventy-nine organisations who had the disciplinary sub-classifier ‘Visual Arts – Live & Performance Art’ applied for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from the Arts Council England in the period of 2018–2022. Of those applicants, eleven organisations identify their main discipline as Combined Art, five Theatre, two Museums and sixty-one Visual Arts.

However, as Live Art is not a disciplinary funding category in and of itself, it is not possible to determine through Arts Council England’s data on NPOs the degree to which Live Art and performance are core to these organisations’ offer or commitment. As mentioned previously, the wording of the sub-classifier ‘Live & Performance Art’ is not necessarily consistent with the use of the term Live Art. Further contextual data from Arts Council England shows us that from April 2018 until March 2020, 782 project grant applications from individuals and organisations to Arts Council England included at least one of the following: the key word ‘Live Art’ or ‘Performance Art’ in the application project title, applicant name or project description and/or the sub-classifier ‘Disciplinary type – Visual Arts-Live & Performance Art’ or ‘sub art form – Visual Art-Live Art’.

The challenges in disaggregating core and project support from Arts Council England to Live Art organisations indicates an area of further research and consideration. As part of mapping Live Art in the UK we offer this snapshot of organisations who participated in our 2021 organisational questionnaire to provide a partial overview of how the sector functions. The purpose is to inform future work on priorities and ways of working for the sector.



Range of organisations

The twenty-two organisations that engaged with our 2021 organisational questionnaire undertake the following types of work (Q1, OrgQue): artist development (18), commissioning (18), curating (17), advocacy (16) and producing (16).

Types of activity described under the category ‘Other’ included: publishing, archive and bookshop (1); festival making (1); activism (2); present peripatetic programme of Live Art (1).

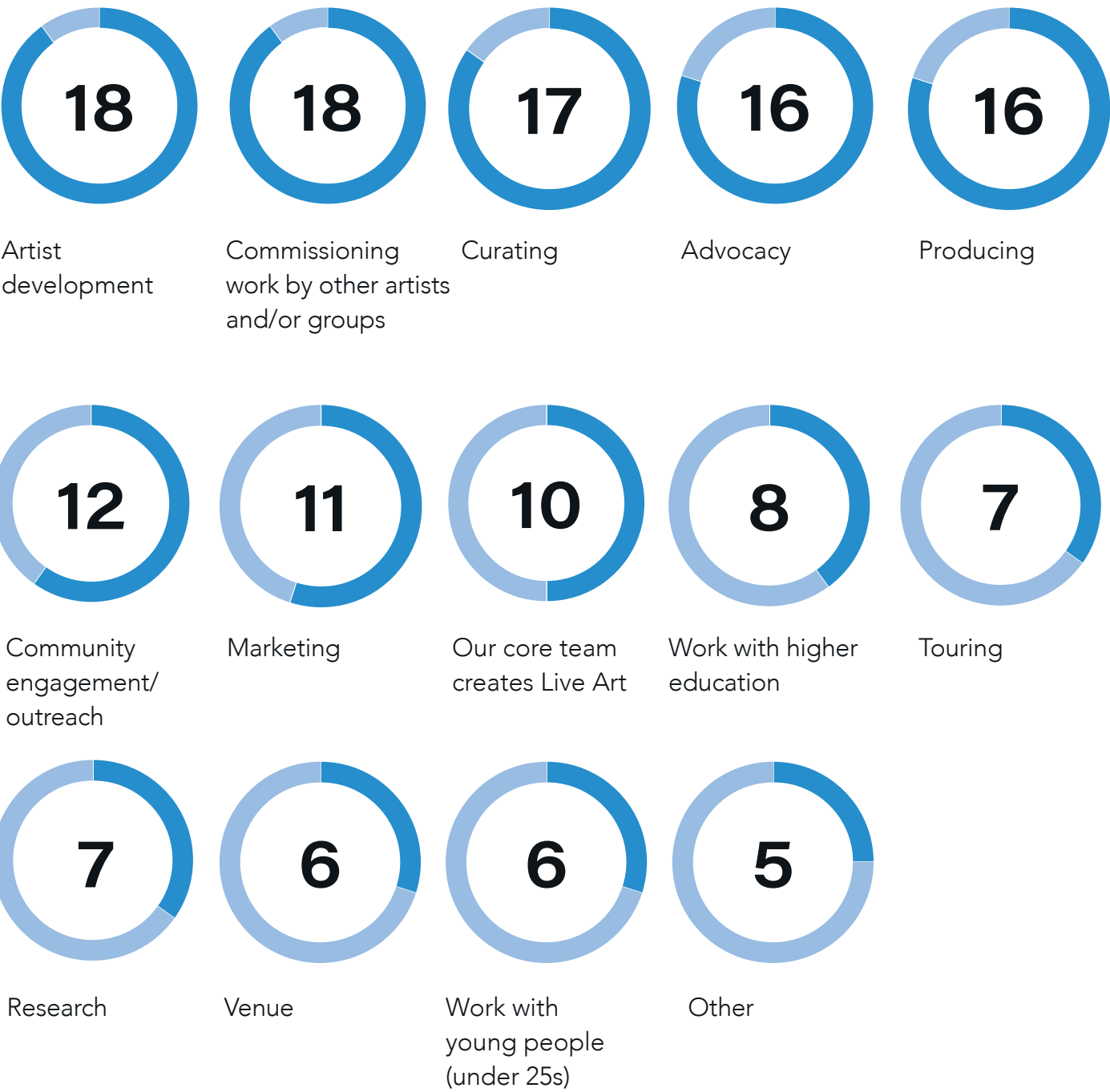
When asked to indicate which of the above activities was the most important to their organisation, of the twenty-two respondents, seven indicated producing, three stated artist development, three said commissioning and another three said venue (Q2, OrgQues).

Of the twenty-two respondents who participated in our 2021 organisational questionnaire, seven had been operating for more than 20 years, five had been operating between 10 and 20 years; three between 8 and 10 years; four between 5 and 8 years and three between 1 and 5 years (Q4, OrgQues).

Most organisations who responded to our 2021 organisational questionnaire followed traditional legal structures for arts organisations, such as being incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and a charity. However, four organisations are unincorporated groups and four are community interest companies (Q7, OrgQues.)

Q1. How would you describe the work that your group/ organisation does (tick all that apply)?

Source: Live Art research, 2021 organisational questionnaire



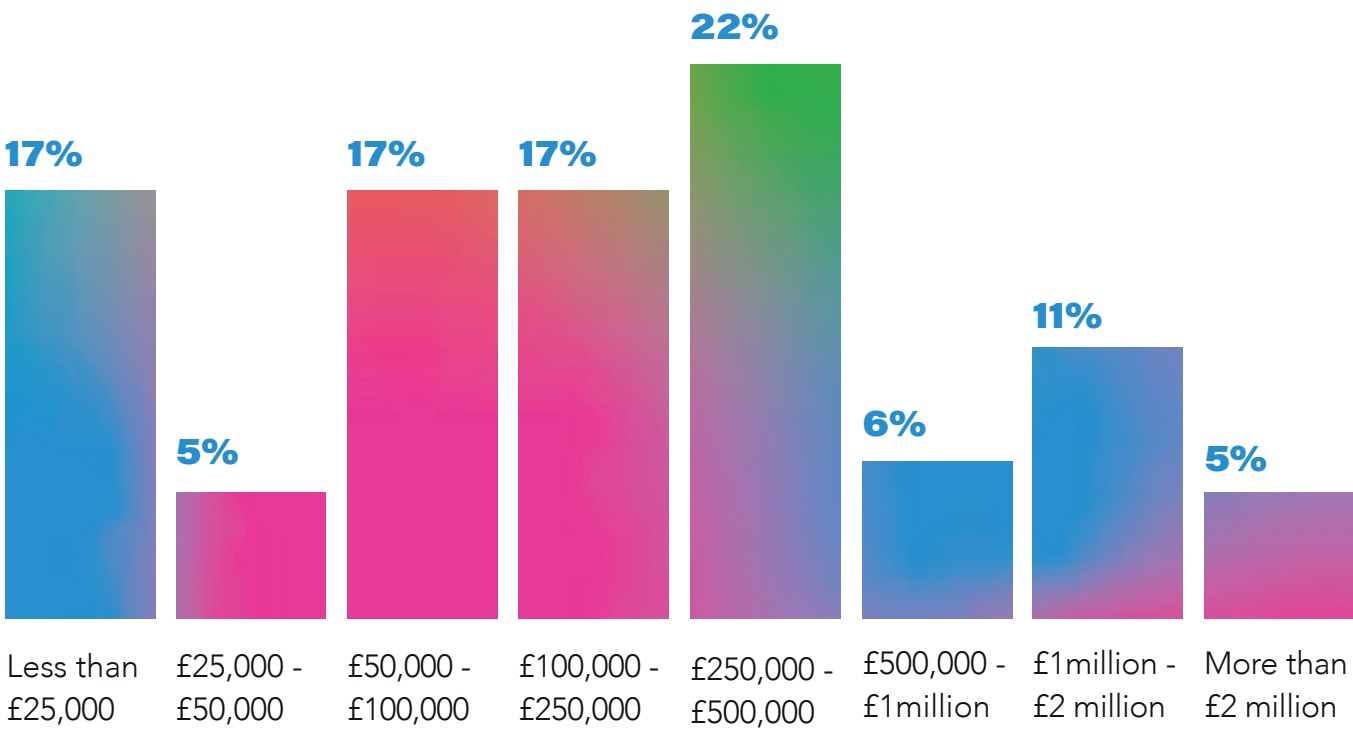
# Income and Funding

All twenty-two organisations who responded to our 2021 organisational questionnaire offered financial information, with most organisations operating at a relatively small scale with small core teams.

Twelve organisations, which is more than half of the respondents, had an average annual turnover of £250,000 or less between 2016 and March 2020 (Q9, OrgQues) and core teams of eight people or less (Q21, OrgQues). Of those organisations operating under £250,000, three had a turnover of £100,000–£250,000; four had a turnover of £50,000–£100,000; one £25,00–£50,000 and four less than £25,000.

Five organisations had an average annual turnover of £500,000 to £2 million, of which four are venue-based and one is a programme with two delivery partners.

**Q9. Between 2016 up to March 2020, what was your total average turnover?**  
22 Answered  
Source: Live Art research, 2021 organisational questionnaire



## Income

Half of the twenty-two organisations responding to our questionnaire receive regular core funding from one of the UK Arts Councils (Q8, OrgQues). The other half did not receive regular core funding. Three respondents commented that although they are not in receipt of core funding, they often receive project funding from a UK Arts Council or another body at varying levels of support.

Of the twenty-two organisations who responded to our questionnaire, seventeen respondents identified core and project funding from a public funder as the most significant source of income and two respondents identified core and project funding from a trust or foundation as the most significant. Of the remaining respondents' partnership funding (2), ticket sales (2) and consultancy (1) were the most significant sources of income.

Most respondents (20) generate some income from partnership funding as well as project funding from trusts and foundations (18) (Q10, OrgQues). Respondents also noted that they generate income via ticket sales, consultancy, donations and sponsorship.

Network collaborations and partnerships have also been vital ways for Live Art initiatives, organisations and the sector as a whole to diversify sources of income. The UK Live Art sector has benefitted from partnership working in the form of opportunities to connect and broaden networks, share learning, develop new ways of working, as well as share resources. The Live Art sector has responded to Arts Council England Development Fund calls (previously known as Strategic Funds, or Managed Funds) by identifying specific urgent needs in the sector and partnering to develop co-produced programmes such as Diverse Actions. LADA, Artsadmin and Home Live Art were awarded consortium funding (2013–15) from Arts Council England's Catalyst programme which aimed to build capacity in fundraising and philanthropic giving within arts organisations. LADA, Artsadmin and Home Live Art worked with Platform to look at ethical fundraising and practices of philanthropic giving, resulting in a step change for the organisations' approach to fundraising, increased donations, and sharing of knowledge with the wider sector.

Another example of investment in order to develop long-term benefits within the Live Art sector was the In Between Time International Showcase in 2017, which received strategic funding from Arts Council England to raise the visibility of UK Live Art practice – presenting twenty-two shows, much of which had never been seen by international audiences, and subsidising international delegates to develop new global markets for UK artists. From our research consultations we know there are aspirations for more networked, collaborative practices and ways of working. A consortium made up of Battersea Arts Centre, Dance4, Fierce, GIFT, MAYK and Transform (commissioned by Arts Council England) will deliver *Horizon*, an international showcase as part of the Edinburgh Festivals in Summer 2021. This type of partnership working perhaps points to future shifts in organising within the sector.



## Expenditure

For the twenty-one organisations who responded to questions about their expenditure, wages and fees for artists were the most significant areas of spending (Q11, OrgQues). For 90% of respondents, wages and artist fees were ranked in the top three areas of significant expenditure. For the remaining 10% of respondents, wages were ranked in either the bottom two areas of expenditure or marked as not applicable.

All twenty-one organisations spend some money on marketing and audience development. Fifteen organisations spend some money on training and professional development for their workforce and two allocate no expenditure to this activity. Eight organisations list venue and office overheads as one of the top three areas of expenditure, while for five organisations there is no allocation for expenditure on this area. Thirteen organisations allocate funds towards fundraising and sixteen on legal and financial services. Other significant areas of expenditure drawn out by organisations, and not directly included in our questionnaire, include production, technical and equipment costs.

## How people work in organisations

Organisations responding to our 2021 organisational questionnaire were asked to differentiate between 'core' and 'contingent' workforce. We defined the 'core' workforce as workers that kept the organisation running on an ongoing basis and 'contingent' as those that work on a project or event basis. As we understood that there would be groups with a range of organisational models responding to our questionnaire, we asked respondents to respond to these categories in a way that made most sense to them.

Between 2016 to March 2020, of the twenty-two respondents to the survey, 50% have a core workforce of three people or less (Q21, OrgQues). Of these eleven respondents, only one organisation had one member of full-time staff, four had a core staff primarily made up of freelancers, three primarily of part-time workers while another two rely on a mix of voluntary and paid work from their core team. One organisation relied wholly on voluntary workers.

Eight organisations have a core workforce of between four and eight people. Of these, five have some full-time staff. One organisation relied wholly on freelancers and another wholly on part-time workers as their core workforce.

Two organisations had a core workforce of twenty-five and twenty-six respectively, and the number of full-time employed sat at twenty and nineteen respectively. These organisations had an annual turnover of between £1million and more than £2million. One organisation had a core workforce of forty-eight, of which thirty-five are volunteers, four are full-time and the remainder part-time and freelance. It has an annual income of between £500,000–£1million.

A total of twenty-one organisations provided details about the average gross annual yearly wage for core members of the workforce (Q23, OrgQues). Across these organisations, seven had an average yearly salary of between £30,000 and £40,000, six between £19,000 and £25,000, three between £12,000 and £15,000 and two gave the figure of £5,000. Two organisations work on variable daily rates and felt the question was not applicable to them and one organisation is entirely composed of volunteers. The mean average wage in the UK for full-time annual employment in the UK for 2019–2020, as collated by the Office for National Statistics, was £31,461.<sup>88</sup>

Between the period of April 2016 to March 2020, all organisations responding to our questionnaire engaged contingent workers to undertake a range of activities (Q30, OrgQues). The vast majority, nineteen (86%) commissioned artworks by artists, followed by fourteen (64%) engaging contingent workers to participate in talks and workshops, and twelve (54%) engaging them as associate artists/artists in residence and in artist development. Thirteen (59%) engaged contingent workers to work with their organisations in marketing and producing roles.

Across the nineteen organisations who provided details on the average gross daily rate for contingent workers, the mean average rate was £169 with the lowest daily rate at £100 and the highest at £300 (Q31, Org Ques). For context, Artists' Union England's day rates of pay as of April 2021 sit at £175.13 per day for a new graduate artist, £229.85 per day for someone with between 3 and 5 years experience and £284.58 per day for someone with 5 or more years experience in their field.<sup>89</sup>

## Key findings for Sustaining and Organising

- Individuals in the UK Live Art sector hold multiple roles and many make less than 50% of their income from working in the sector.
- The UK Live Art sector is supported by freelancers, part-time, and fixed term workers.
- The UK Live Art sector is supported by self-subsidy and much of the work undertaken, including artist commissions, is underpaid.
- Organisations in the UK Live Art sector are predominantly small with small staff numbers.
- The UK Live Art sector has a track record of successful partnership working and network collaborations.

<sup>88</sup> Office of National Statistics, 'Employee Earnings in the UK: 2020'.

<sup>89</sup> Artists' Union England, 'Rates of Pay'.

# Section Eight: Post-March 2020 Conditions

In this section, we consider some of the key issues impacting organisations and individuals in the UK Live Art sector post-March 2020, including COVID-19, Brexit and renewed calls for anti-racist action. In compiling our analysis of the sector since March 2020, we purposely draw on wider contextual data about workers in performing arts (dance and theatre) and visual arts sectors, as these sectors are most readily recognised by practitioners working with Live Art, as evidenced in our 2019 survey of individuals.

We are also informed by our ongoing research activities, including roundtables and our 2021 organisational questionnaire. Through our research activities since March 2020, we have noted the ongoing personal and professional pressures and challenges facing individuals and organisations in the sector, due to the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## A. COVID-19

Our research conversations with practitioners working with Live Art, together with reporting in the wider arts and cultural sector tell of the tremendous impacts of COVID-19 on personal and cultural life. These impacts have been complex, affecting individuals, organisations and activities in different ways. Whilst some have seen demand for their work plummet or faced redundancy, others have managed to continue working. Circumstances have been extremely challenging, especially for those whose work relies on physical, in-person interaction, something which is core to much Live Art practice.

A recent study examining the impacts of COVID-19 on creative and cultural organisations in the South West of England found that organisations and practitioners in non-digital sectors (such as theatres, festivals and events) are five times more likely to be negatively affected (temporarily closed, permanently ceased production or severe reduction in production) by the pandemic, compared to digital and hybrid sectors.<sup>90</sup>

Although arts and cultural spaces have been closed to the public, artists, organisations and projects in the Live Art sector have demonstrated remarkable creativity, quickly responding and developing digital methods to create, produce

and distribute Live Art. As activity recommenced during the first year of the pandemic, artist development became a more significant strand of activity for organisations, particularly for those organisations who were pivoting to working with digital.

## Impact on organisations

Most of the twenty-two projects and organisations who responded to our Spring 2021 organisational questionnaire about the impact of COVID-19 noted that their operations had been dramatically changed by the global pandemic. Building-based organisations shut their premises, with some putting their staff on furlough. A small number of organisations reported receipt of arts and culture sector government support in the form of emergency and recovery funds.

We noted through wider consultations with the sector that organisations' annual fundraising targets were imperilled due to the suspension of funding programmes by trusts and foundations. However, some organisations in receipt of funding through specific programmes were given extensions to reallocate grant support.

Organisations noted that the government schemes to support organisations and workers in the first year of the pandemic have impacted them in different ways. Some organisations commented that the majority of people working with them were freelance workers, and therefore the initiative or organisation was not eligible for the UK government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). It was unclear whether those individuals were able to claim other kinds of support such as Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), emergency funding from UK arts councils, or other governmental support. Several organisations have undertaken staff restructures in order to minimise redundancies.

<sup>90</sup> Tarek Virani and Jen Blackwood, 'From Catastrophe to Hybridity to Recovery?', Bristol: Bristol + Bath Creative R&D, 2021, p.7.



## Impact on freelancers

Low eligibility for support schemes was noted as placing increased pressure on freelance workers in the UK Live Art sector. According to the Centre for Cultural Value's analysis of Labour Force Survey data from the Office of National Statistics, freelancers who make up a large proportion of workers in the performing arts 'are at the epicentre of the crisis for freelancers',<sup>91</sup> with many seeing their livelihoods significantly hit by COVID-19, ineligible for forms of government support or support from emergency culture funding, such as the Cultural Recovery Fund. According to a DACS survey of visual artists, 73% of respondents' livelihoods were affected by COVID-19 through the cancellation or postponement of projects, and being left out of pocket due to project expenses or non-payment of fees.<sup>92</sup> ONS data shows that women and those from younger age groups are particularly impacted.<sup>93</sup>

The pandemic shone a light on the central role freelancers play within the wider arts and cultural sector, with artists and practitioners working with Live Art participating in the Freelance Taskforce.<sup>94</sup> Through our consultations we note that organisations and initiatives within Live Art have become more proactive in seeking to work with freelance artists and arts workers since March 2020. This has consisted of a mix of extensions or modifications to existing projects, new projects or events to be delivered online, support for digital/online residencies, sponsorship of an artist or freelance worker as part of the Freelance Task Force, and research bursaries for artists. Some organisations repurposed money allocated for marketing to support artists and freelancers.

<sup>91</sup> Rebecca Florison et al., 'The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 3', Centre for Cultural Value, 2021, <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-jobs-in-the-cultural-sector-part-3/>

<sup>92</sup> DACS, 'Manifesto for Artists', London, 2021, p.7, [https://www.dacs.org.uk/getattachment/Latest-News/DACS-launches-Manifesto-for-Artists-%E2%80%93-a-roadmap-fo/Manifesto\\_for\\_Artists\\_2021.pdf.aspx](https://www.dacs.org.uk/getattachment/Latest-News/DACS-launches-Manifesto-for-Artists-%E2%80%93-a-roadmap-fo/Manifesto_for_Artists_2021.pdf.aspx)

<sup>93</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey', October 2020, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/coronavirusanditsimpactontheLabourForceSurvey/2020-10-13>

<sup>94</sup> The Freelance Taskforce was established in Summer 2020. It was initiated by Fuel Theatre, in partnership with over 100 organisations. Sponsoring over 160 self-employed people working in theatre and performance arts across the UK, it was set up to examine the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on England's performing arts freelance workforce.

Based on our research consultations and wider research, impacts and considerations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Prioritising provision of access and addressing barriers faced by artists and practitioners working in the Live Art sector that have been amplified by the pandemic, particularly the experiences of individuals from marginalised and minoritised backgrounds and individuals with caring responsibilities.
- Cultivating sustained forms of financial and pastoral support from funded organisations to artists/freelance practitioners.
- Building on knowledge and resource sharing practices developed since the COVID-19 pandemic to create more accessible and inclusive working practices in the sector.
- Examining the impact of social distancing on artform development, teaching, research and audience development.
- Considering the effects of social distancing on the presentation of Live Art in smaller venues and spaces, and how this issue may be pertinent to support for the presentation of Live Art in non-urban and rural locations.
- Investment in digital, as a means to further distribute Live Art and explore artform development.



Tania Camara, *Oreo Suite*. Photo by Tamsin Drury, 2020.

## B. Brexit

At the time of writing, many initiatives and organisations have yet to experience the full impacts of the UK's exit from the European Union as much international activity has been halted due to COVID-19: Over 90% of Live Art initiatives and organisations responding to our 2021 organisational questionnaire reported that they feel inadequately prepared for Brexit.

The pandemic has prevented us seeing the worst impacts of Brexit on our ability to further internationalise our programme, specifically in terms of mobility and bureaucracy.

– Respondent, 2021 organisational questionnaire

There remains a need for government clarification over mobility and visas for international artists and freelancers working within the UK. Wales Arts International/Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland, Arts Council England and Arts Council Northern Ireland are working on Arts Infopoint UK, a joint pilot initiative to develop resources that support visiting artist mobility, particularly in the areas of visas, taxation and social security. Changes to how the UK works with the European Union, Europe and the wider world are certainly at play within the wider arts and culture sector, yet it is anticipated that effects are especially felt for artforms like Live Art that rely on bodies being present in the presentation of work.

The impacts of Brexit on funding of Live Art organisations and initiatives are varied, with some organisations and initiatives continuing to participate in programmes of work and in receipt of funding from European foundations and EU Culture funding, such as Creative Europe.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, others have lost funding for planned partnership work with UK organisations who are no longer able to participate in Creative Europe programmes. Additionally, artists, cultural workers and organisations based in the UK working with/in Live Art have expressed fear of reputational damage that Brexit has caused to international relationships.

We have direct experiences of the hostile environment policy that has been further exacerbated by Brexit, however, the different layers of obstacles Brexit is creating for cultural workers are manifesting in new ways every day and in every interaction we have with individual migrant workers that share their experiences.

– Respondent, 2021 organisational questionnaire

The expected impacts of Brexit for artists, cultural workers, initiatives and organisations working with/in Live Art internationally include:

- Confusion around inadequate guidelines for touring companies.
- Additional costs and administration required due to visas, tariffs and emerging rules on international touring EU nations and the UK.
- Reduced access to European partnership, co-production and funding opportunities as UK organisations, artists and cultural workers will be considered 'third country' partners within EU funding frameworks and will lose eligibility for other funding based in Europe.
- 'Brain drain' of artists and cultural workers who are EU citizens leaving the UK in light of continued uncertainty and no longer feeling welcome in the UK.
- Increase in costs and administrative time for travelling (for migrant artists that means also increased emotional stress due to the inability to meet relatives and friends in one's country of origin) and obtaining visas.
- Fear that if you invite artists to come to the UK, they will face increased risk of being denied access at the UK border.

Despite these extremely challenging circumstances as outlined above, as well as fear of cultural isolation within the political context of increased nationalism, the majority of UK Live Art organisations and initiatives reported that continuing to take creative risk and devising solutions to the additional barriers to collaborating with European partners remains an important aim.

<sup>95</sup> Conditions of participation in Creative Europe funding have been outlined in a memorandum from Creative Europe Desk UK, and are no longer updated as of 31 March 2021. See Creative Europe Desk UK, 'The UK's Participation in future Creative Europe programmes', 30 March 2021, <https://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/news/update-creative-europe-and-outcome-eu-referendum>



## C. Racial equity

The rise of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Summer 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, have resulted in a groundswell of discussion, pledges and activities in the UK arts and cultural sector to address systemic racism. Whilst this has taken place locally within organisations, it has been significantly bolstered by networked groups of individuals and initiatives within the arts and cultural sector, led by Black and ethnically diverse artists and practitioners building anti-racist accountability across the arts and cultural sector. Notably, the Theatre #PullUporShutUp campaign has called for transparency about ethnic diversity representation within the theatre workforce; the *Manifesto for (Better) Representation in UK Performing Arts*, developed as part of the Freelance Taskforce, provides a toolkit of questions from freelancers towards organisations to help define and nurture representation and accountability; and Inc Arts' Speak – Listen – Reset – Heal anti-racism conference created a space where voices, experiences and people impacted by racism were acknowledged, those empowered to make changes listened, and learnings have developed into the Inc Arts anti-racism *Unlock* toolkit. Organisational partnerships created by Black Womxn In Theatre (BWIT) and Eclipse Theatre in partnership with the Bush Theatre created resources such as the #allofus Redundancy Care package and #heretostay programmes to support ethnically diverse and migrant arts workers facing redundancy.

These renewed calls for anti-racist actions and racial equity have been timely for organisations and projects working with Live Art in the UK, as they coincide with the conclusion of Live Art UK's Diverse Actions project. From our research consultations, experiences of racism – including microaggressions, emotional abuse and victimisation of practitioners – within the Live Art sector mirror those found in the wider arts and cultural landscape. We also note that these experiences influence individuals' decisions to leave the Live Art sector, and therefore negatively impact ethnically diverse representation in senior roles. Indeed, ONS figures for 2019 and 2020 reveal a drop of 44% of Black and minority ethnic women working in the arts and entertainment sector.<sup>96</sup>

Responses to our 2021 organisational questionnaire highlight the opportunities, aspirations and steps towards making significant change in the Live Art sector. Organisations and projects reported that actions they are undertaking so far include – anti-racism training across Live Art UK members, overhauling recruitment and retention strategies to support individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, developing anti-racist tour riders, and actively recruiting artists and staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

<sup>96</sup> Trades Union Congress (TUC), 'Jobs and Recovery Monitor – BME Workers' Report, Issue 3', January 2021, p.4, <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/jobs-and-recovery-monitor-bme-workers>

Research dialogues and conversations have noted future racial equity actions as including:

- The development of accountability mechanisms to report and address issues of discrimination.
- Ongoing commitment and responsibility to racial justice, with appropriate resources to build equitable ways of working and organisational structures – including decision-making and pay structures.
- The development of Live Art's role in decolonising artmaking practices and investment in diverse-led spaces.
- Long-term investment in recruitment, progression and leadership support structures for individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds to thrive and develop throughout the workforce of the Live Art sector.
- Recognising the knowledge of 'experts by experience' and valuing the contributions of artists and practitioners from ethnically diverse backgrounds.<sup>97</sup>

Above all, research conversations about the impacts of COVID-19 and calls for racial equity have brought to the fore the importance of provision of access and structures of care. Whilst transformations of working environments and conditions in light of COVID-19 have been challenging, there have also been advantages: namely, increased awareness and provision of access. D/deaf and disabled people within the Live Art sector, carers, and people from marginalised and minoritised backgrounds have been vocal in demands that Live Art and the broader arts and cultural sector needs to continue improving and addressing accessibility as part of broader aims of removing barriers to participation and continued working within the arts. This is especially relevant to the Live Art sector, where bodies are the focal point of the artform – these body-based practices require care and access provision.

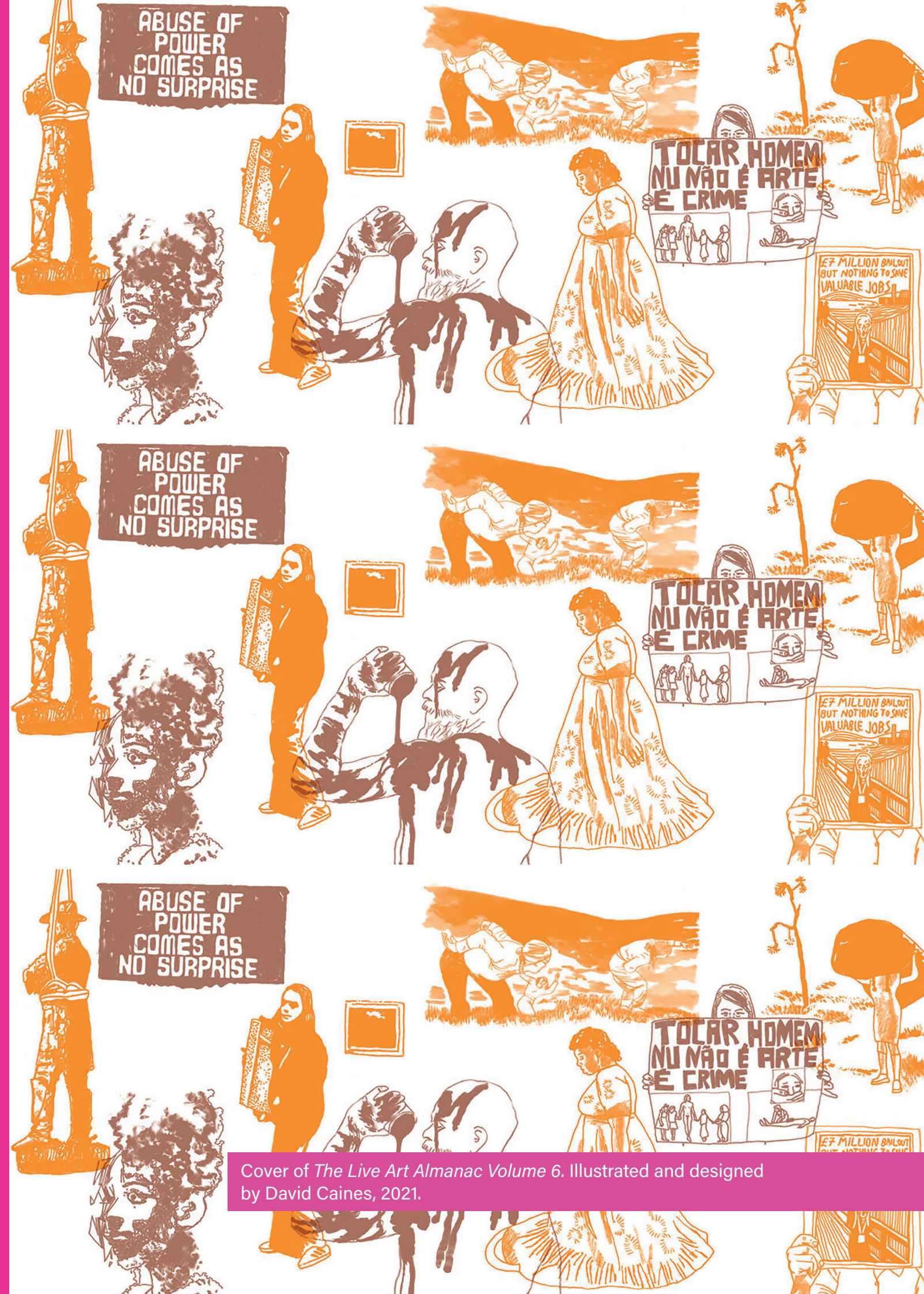
<sup>97</sup> As explained by Baljeet Sandhu, experts by experience denotes individuals 'who seek to use their lived experience to inform the work of social purpose organisations, to drive and lead social change, and/or to drive their social impact work'. See Baljeet Sandhu, 'The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change', 2017, p.2, <http://thelivedexperience.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Lived-Experience-Baljeet-Sandhu-VLE-summary-web-ok-2.pdf>



# 03

## Contexts for Futures: Perspectives on Live Art from Artists and Organisations

Tools and Perspectives



Cover of *The Live Art Almanac Volume 6*. Illustrated and designed by David Caines, 2021.



**Live Art has been at the forefront of championing, being led by and listening to the marginalised and to activist voices. Being creative and playful with radical ideas is such a brilliant tool in shining light on the upturned rocks the mainstream would often rather not disturb. The worms and the beetles and the grubs are beautiful and necessary. Live Art can and should continue to use its position to work with the purse-holders and decision makers to show how best to utilise the core concepts of questioning, opening space, and listening, rather than instrumentalising or reaching targets. How to look under rocks, and not be squeamish. How to embrace and activate the idea proven this last year – that we can change if we really want to. Let's want to more.**

– Perspective: Ilana Mitchell

**Some of the labels or constraints that we place on artistic practice feel out of step with the lived reality of how people are making work currently. There is a much more social turn or civic responsibility implicit in how artists are making work. That has to do with a lot of things, whether it's social justice movements or reckonings around anti-racist practice or environmental challenges. There's an urgency there that Live Art is very well placed to lead and be in service to, which feels like a very exciting space for arts and cultural practice. There's a form of leadership from the underrepresented or the margins that can shift public discourse in a very productive way. Live Art, historically and currently, plays a big part in that discourse.**

– Perspective: Patrick Fox, Heart of Glass

Throughout our research we have heard from our consultees – artists, arts workers, researchers, teachers, thinkers, organisations, and funders – that one of the strengths of Live Art is its ability to create new contexts for creative practice for individuals and communities. Part 3: Contexts for Futures builds on this claim. It centres on a series of 'perspectives' from artists and organisations, each offering their viewpoint on what Live Art is and how it works.

The premise for these perspectives developed out of dialogues within the research collective about the relationship between contemporary arts policy, in particular Let's Create from Arts Council England, and Live Art practitioners and practices. The research collective was especially curious to consider how Live Art creatively and critically explores principles underpinning commitments to creativity, localism and transnationalism in the UK.

Each dialogue considered a particular theme, including, but not limited to, risk and innovation, health and wellbeing, participatory practices and placemaking, social action, climate justice, diversity and the mainstream.

Key questions arising from the thematic dialogues include:

- What models of practice from Live Art are informing and shaping the cultural sector's efforts to address the climate crisis?
- How does Live Art produce value, take different forms of risk, and innovate beyond business-centred models of value?
- What types of relationship to the mainstream does Live Art allow practitioners and organisations to explore?
- How are practitioners working with Live Art experimenting with and creating new modes of encounter and relationship to civiness and place?
- How does Live Art offer a strategy to rethink the role and positioning of culture within communities?
- What ways of working and ways of being is Live Art embedding to challenge ongoing inequalities and power imbalances within the cultural sector?
- What conditions of labour, care and support are being built by Live Art practitioners to facilitate health and wellbeing?

Whilst these issues are considered at a macro scale in Part 2, the research collective was keen to create a space within the report that allows for artists and organisations to speak directly about their specific experiences. Informed by the thematic dialogues, perspectives were selected to illustrate the diversity of practices and practitioners working with Live Art across the regions and nations of the UK, and in relation to geography, class, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age and experience.

Part 3 consists of nineteen stand-alone 'perspectives' reflecting on how Live Art operates from the viewpoint of arts practitioners and organisations. Respondents were asked a series of questions from a small bank of material, prompting them to explore how Live Art – as a strategy – informs their work, their approach to audiences, and how the sector has supported them. We also asked respondents to reflect on the relationship between the future, Live Art and social change. The print publication contains a condensed version of each contribution and unabridged versions can be found online.

## Introducing the perspectives

The ability for Live Art to **bring the everyday and creative practice together** is key to Fox Irving, who finds Live Art creates contexts for them to blend their expertise as a mental health nurse with their artistic practice. Live Art's commitment to **creating contexts for the development of artistic practice** is one of the key elements of the sector reflected on by Tim Bromage. For Vijay Patel, Live Art **rewrites the rules and preconceptions of how an artist and audience might share a space and communicate** with each other.

As Selina Thompson points out, working with non-professionals requires **artists and arts organisations to share resources with communities** to avoid exploitative practices. Live Art can, Thompson suggests, lead the way in terms of meaningful exchange and engagement with the reality of people's lives that moves beyond instrumentalisation. Patrick Fox from Heart of Glass also reflects on how working with Live Art creates possibilities for artists, organisations and publics to **rethink cultural participation in relation to where we live and call 'home'**.

Kwong Lee, from Manchester International Festival, speaks of how a Live Art project created an important frame for young audiences, artists and the festival to **question and challenge established hierarchies within community and participatory art practice**. Similarly, for Joshua Sofaer, the openness of Live Art as a term has allowed a space to iterate projects and practices that **move beyond preconceived notions of discipline and community art**.

Live Art's potential to **connect across locations, identities and species** at a time of polarisation and crisis is highlighted by Kira O'Reilly, who offers an artist's perspective on the risks of imagination. For Sandra Corrigan Breathnach, it is Live Art's capacity to **engender new ways of thinking and appreciate difference** that can transform perceptions. The theme of risk is also taken up by Bean, who speaks of the **resource, trust and belief** required to develop Live Art practices.

The **courage to experiment, initiate action and explore the relationship between bodies in space** are core principles artists and activists Lena Šimić and Tim Jeeves associate with their Live Art practices. Ilana Mitchell reflects on how Live Art's **openness to dialogue, play and provocation** have supported her to create something that looks like an institution while resisting institutionalisation. The project *Sex with Cancer*, a collaboration between Brian Lobel and Joon Lynn Goh, throws into relief how Live Art's interdisciplinarity invites artists to focus on **social change through artistic methodologies of engagement**.

Daniel Oliver discusses how Live Art's **commitment to bodies, otherness, and diversity** supports him to feel more confident to try things differently, be it as an artist, parent or teacher. Meanwhile, for Jade Montserrat, Live Art's commitment to ethical practice builds **pathways for practitioners and organisations to model structural change**, particularly in relation to race, ethnicity and care.

Jane Trowell, from Platform, reflects on the ways the Live Art sector has **helped to drive structural change on climate justice** in the arts. Artist Ellie Harrison's work to **rethink the structural relationship between art, economics and climate justice** has been deeply informed by Live Art practices and sector initiatives.

Live Art is a **home for different aspects of individual and community identity to intersect and be celebrated**. Simon Casson from Duckie reflects on the ways Live Art's unexpected nature supports informal platforms for queerness in working class communities. For Rosana Cade, Live Art offers a frame to **reimagine the relationship between identity, intimacy and public space**.

Supporting dynamic, inclusive and sustainable opportunities for individuals and communities to be creative and value their cultural contributions is at the core of contemporary arts policy and strategy throughout the UK.<sup>98</sup> These perspectives offer productive entry points into what Live Art offers artists, organisations and funders as they consider the challenges and opportunities facing the cultural sector.

<sup>98</sup> Arts Council England, 'Let's Create'; Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 'Inspire, Connect, Lead'; Arts Council of Wales // Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru, 'Inspire'; Creative Scotland, '2014-2024: Unlocking Potential, Embracing Ambition.'



## Perspective: Bean

Bean is the co-founder and former co-director of ]performance s p a c e[. Bean makes performance work that incorporates live voice, installation and film. She uses technology as a malleable material, testing and pushing it through live moments; from her earliest works playing super 8 films through her vagina, to recent works digitally tracking her body to live-edit sound. Through her work, Bean often 'speaks' of things silenced in daily life or attempts to undo language used in mass media/normative pop culture. She makes performance as an act of transformation, a catharsis through sound, a reclamation and refusal of the body.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

Live Art has informed my practice right from my first experience of it at Dartington College of Arts. It's really the only way I've made work and discovering it as a terminology, as a frame to hold my work and ideas early on, was invaluable.

It's the way that it allows for so many different mediums and approaches to combine, to become entangled with each other, in a live moment. Life is a complex, messy web and Live Art celebrates this.

My work has always been multimedia in some capacity and the terminology of Live Art allowed me to expand that media out of formal gallery installations and really push it to its limits through temporal experiments. So I guess for me the key thing about Live Art really is that there are no limits.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

I'm not sure about Live Art as a strategy. For me, that terminology suggests a formality which I don't find in Live Art, or rather it's not how I relate to it. To me, Live Art has always

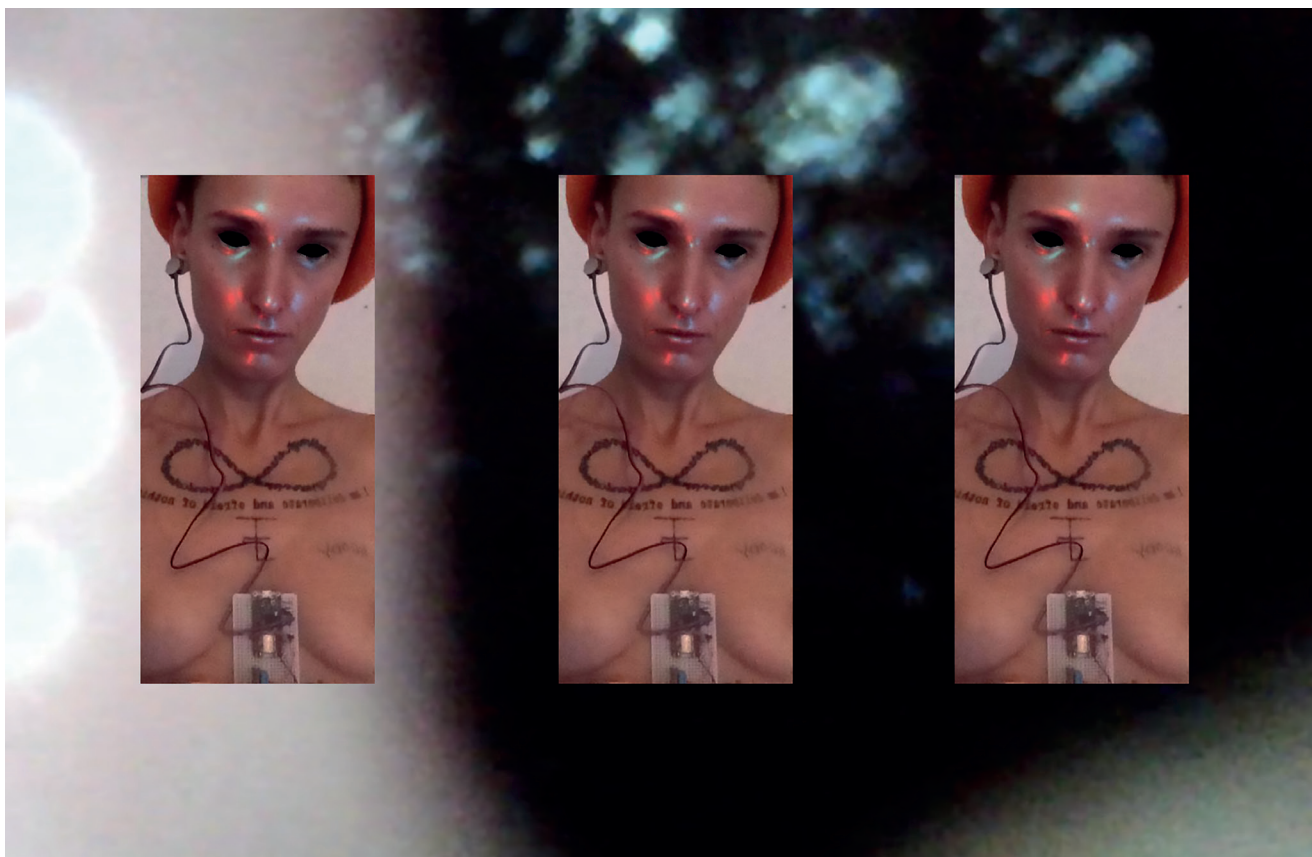
been a form that allows for a fluidity, or a slipperiness, but maybe that is a strategy in itself.

I think the longer I've made performance, the more I have begun to actively play with my engagement with the audience. I enjoy really focusing on the connection of the bodies in that live space and I often use eye contact or physical proximity to bring audience members to my attention. Looking someone in the eye can be a portal to anywhere and I don't think there is another medium that allows you to do that.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

I think this is a really big and really simple question in many ways, which I'm sure for many artists or people who have experienced Live Art practices can answer easily: which is the joy of Live Art, everyone is knowing.

Live Art offers an alternative to product and production-based consumerist societies. It asks for a slowing down and a silence, for your attention, for you to listen, deeply. And this is something rare right now.



Bean, *Kawasaki*. Image by Bean, 2019.



## Perspective: Daniel Oliver

Daniel Oliver is an artist, teacher and researcher based in London. He is dyspraxic and creates solo and collaborative 'awkward' participatory performances in theatres, clubs and festival contexts. Recent performance work includes *ChipolotarARTparty* (2015), a participatory performance about the future and *Dadders: The Lockdown Telly Show* with Frauke Requardt (The Place, 2020), an adaptation and reimagining of their live show for digital space. Daniel also regularly hosts workshops and discussion events to propose and reflect on connections between contemporary performance practices and positive approaches to neurodiversity.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your approach?*

Live Art encourages me to celebrate approaches to performance-making and sharing that are deemed inappropriate or dysfunctional in other performance practices. It also informs the way I link those excluded and othered ways of making and doing to my excluded and othered ways of being – in my case, as a dyspraxic. There is a punky DIY attitude in Live Art that informs my approach to making and to the design of my projects. Live Art (and the artists working in Live Art that I most admire) also encourages me to think about how the attitude and approaches I embrace in my art practice might also be embraced in other areas of my life – for example, as a parent or teacher. Live Art also encourages me to remind myself and audiences that I have a body and that bodies are all different and weird and uncontrollable and lovely and that the best performances remind us that we have/are bodies.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

LADA has supported my work through the DIY projects and through the publication of my book, *Awkwoods*. I have benefitted immensely from informal and semi-formal chats with LADA staff about the development and dissemination of specific projects, about collaboration, and about my practice more generally. I have benefitted in the same way by chatting with fellow artists working with Live Art practices. There is, for me, an incredibly supportive and refreshingly informal and spontaneous peer-to-peer support network. This less formal support has been most important to me, in terms of self-confidence and a will to keep going. In the early 2000s I benefited from being an audience member at several of LADA and Queen Mary, University of London's East End Collaboration events. These were very formative for the

development and dissemination of my practice. Many venues and platforms and collectives aligned with Live Art – including Reactor (Nottingham), Centre for Live Art Yorkshire (Leeds), SPILL (Ipswich), BUZZCUT (Glasgow), and Forest Fringe have given me space and time to develop new ideas, or to platform finished performances.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

For me, a key idea that runs through the practices that I would define as Live Art is the insistence that other worlds are possible. That it is possible to support, celebrate and develop ways of being and doing that are othered, excluded or undermined within our current systems (white supremacist, middle class, neurotypical, cis-gendered, patriarchal, misogynistic, ableist systems...). For me, this is why Live Art's formal experimentation, transgression and radicality, in connection with its systemic and material support of work by othered subjects, is so important. It offers an approach to social change in which we can identify that something that is deemed to be 'proper' is not working for us or including us, and then to feel confident and supported in trying something different.



Daniel Oliver, *ChipolotarARTparty*, Buzzcut Festival, Glasgow. Photo by Julia Bauer, 2017.



## Perspective: Ellie Harrison

Ellie Harrison is an artist and activist based in Glasgow, whose work takes a variety of forms: from installations and performance/ events, to lectures, live broadcasts and political campaigns. Harrison seeks to make visible the connections between social, environmental and economic injustices in our world, and to actively address them. As well as making playful politically-engaged work for galleries and public spaces, Harrison is also founder and coordinator of the national Bring Back British Rail campaign and is the agent for *The Artists' Bond*. Since 2013, Harrison has been Lecturer in Contemporary Art Practices at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice and approach to the Radical Renewable Art + Activism Fund (RRAAF)?*

I studied Fine Art, originally in Nottingham from 1998–2001, where there was a very active Live Art scene. I always saw performance, interaction, collaboration and new media as key tools and tactics available to me for communicating ideas. After I moved to Glasgow in 2008, to study for a Masters at Glasgow School of Art, my work became more politicised. The idea for RRAAF came about in 2014–2015 after seeing the impact of Cameron's austerity programme on public funding for the arts and inspiring campaigns (like Liberate Tate) drawing attention to the damaging impact of corporate sponsorship, specifically by fossil fuel companies.

The basic premise of RRAAF was to set up a new organisation which would invest in renewable energy – one of the solutions to the climate crisis – and use profits generated to create the funding scheme.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences and/or participants?*

The direction the project took next was informed by my Live Art practice. In 2016, I undertook what was seen as a 'controversial' year-long durational performance called *The Glasgow Effect*. For that whole calendar year, I refused to leave Glasgow's city limits, or use any vehicles except my bike. It was a protest against an increasingly globalised economy and a real-life experiment in 'thinking globally, acting locally'.

It was during this year that I really came to appreciate the importance of place. This is of particular significance when talking about renewable energy installations, as they cannot just be plonked on any particular community without their consent. Although the RRAAF project had developed a significant

'community of interest' around the UK, what it needed to get to the next stage was a 'community of place'. Over the next three years, we registered the Community Benefit Society and elected more local people onto the board. When we eventually secured funding from the Scottish Government in 2018, Glasgow Community Energy was born. During the coronavirus lockdown in 2020, we successfully installed solar panels on the roofs of two schools in Glasgow. These first two installations alone will save nearly 50 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year and raise several thousand pounds annually, which can be reinvested into local community activism through our Community Benefit Fund.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

The skills I learnt at art school – critical thinking, practical skills, confidence, self-motivation – are vital, not only for individual wellbeing, but also for creating any social change. The answer is to make a creative education a normal part of everyone's life and to fight for the social conditions where everyone *actually can be* an artist (and an activist), and not just the privileged few.



Glasgow Community Energy team at Glendale Primary School in Pollokshields, Glasgow. Photo by James Alcock, 2020.

## Perspective: Fox Irving



Fox Irving, *You Only Hate Us Because We Are Working Class*, Acrylic on Newsprint. Image courtesy of the artist, 2017.

Fox Irving's art is shaped by the liminal, precarious identity they inhabit as queer, femme, and working class. With a playful, DIY approach informed by activist strategies and centring collaboration, Fox investigates how art can be used as a tool of empowerment by their own marginalised communities. They have received various awards and grants, including a Jerwood Arts Bursary for self-defined professional development, an Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant, a LADA DIY grant in 2019 (working with Tate Liverpool), a Heart of Glass' professional development bursary for Women in the Arts, and they have undertaken METAL's Time and Space residency.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

I have always wanted to be an artist since I was a small child. I used to do lots of drawings and stick them around the living room and charge my family 20p to come in the living room. I grew up on an estate in Liverpool and I'm from a working class, benefit class background.

I didn't go to art school until I was 30. None of my mentors were working class and a lot of students could afford to do unpaid internships.

I kind of fell into an MA in Visual Art at Camberwell College of Art, and started to break out of typical moulds. I wasn't a printmaker or a painter or a video artist. I wasn't really a performance artist. I was an activist, doing performances as part of protests, painting banners, leading groups and doing a lot about climate change.

And that's how I found Live Art. Live Art is a space where things don't need to fit in; art can be anything and your whole life could be the art.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

I started my Women Working Class peer mentoring group at LADA, thinking about how we deconstruct academic, white cube space, or art spaces and the organisations that we live in. I was allowed to challenge and tackle things without worrying about what the director's gonna think of me. Live Art actively encourages that kind of thinking. Then I started to affiliate with other arts organisations and get commissioned by them, such as Heart of Glass who are based in St Helens near Liverpool, and Jerwood Arts.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to experiment with how you work with audiences?*

Live Art made me think about how I switch roles. I work full-time as a mental health nurse. I've been doing it for 10 years, but I always kept that profession separate from my Live Art practice. I learnt about the artist and activist the vacuum cleaner, whose practice is mental health. He was working with Heart of Glass to turn an old Argos shop on the high street in St Helens into this amazing alternative art space, all about mental health made by artists who have mental health problems. James (the vacuum cleaner) invited me in to host and hold the space for the artists and the public. It was the first time I'd brought my mental health nurse training and artist training together.

This is an example of how Live Art allows my work and my practice to be fluid. When I become the mental health nurse/artist, that role is about bringing together 'non-professionals'. My role is to take care of the artists and the audiences. And because Live Art is a strategy, I can move in and out of these spaces as an artist.



## Perspective: Ilana Mitchell, Wunderbar



Ilana Mitchell, *Edicure (Paw-Paw-Phwoar edition)*. Image courtesy of the artist, 2019.

Ilana Mitchell is a practising artist, curator and project facilitator. She is artistic director of Wunderbar, which has been producing and creating 'playfully disruptive and seriously curious' projects since 2009, is Chair of The NewBridge Project and was a founding member of Star & Shadow Cinema. Other projects include The Year of Years, Edicure and an ongoing challenge to explore every Four-stack Interchange in the world.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice/project/approach?*

My work lies at the intersection of community art, activism, research and Live Art. There is a good reason for the term Live Art in this context – it offers a legitimacy for marginalised practitioners, and practices, in an otherwise mainstream and often problematic art world.

Art for me is a process: a verb not a noun, an approach not an outcome. The process of my education helped me to learn how to make things, how to experiment, and that that could play a role in being part of public conversations and activism. It is why creative education is so important.

Over the last twelve years, I have run something that looks like an arts organisation (Wunderbar) in order to elevate the work it supports. Making something that looks like an institution while at the same time resisting institutionalism is a challenge. It is proving hard to both exist and resist. So instead of resisting, what can be positive action? Live Art has the tools and the ability to be asking these questions.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

Live Art, at its best, holds doors open and starts conversations.

The strategies of Live Art – of being mobile, of popping up in the places where people just are, of being playful and provocative and open to dialogue – allow those conversations to flow. Some examples I think have worked: a battered old sofa, mismatched teacups and a kettle outside John Lewis; offering henna tattoos in a park; playfully, carefully, inviting strangers into other stranger's homes in big cities and small towns.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

The pandemic created a levelling of abilities to hold and start conversations because many people were at home and online. Voices of the marginalised – particularly around racial and disability justice – were heard, and the arts world has been reacting. Through this time some actions have already been shown and proven to work, and to be better – what will stick? Live Art has been at the forefront of championing, being led by and listening to the marginalised and to activist voices. Being creative and playful with radical ideas is such a brilliant tool in shining light on the upturned rocks the mainstream would often rather not disturb. The worms and the beetles and the grubs are beautiful and necessary. Live Art can and should continue to use its position to work with the purse-holders and decision-makers to show how best to utilise the core concepts of questioning, opening space, and listening, rather than instrumentalising or reaching targets. How to look under rocks, and not be squeamish. How to embrace and activate the idea proven this last year – that we can change if we really want to. Let's *want* to more.



## Perspective: Jade Montserrat



Jade Montserrat, *Record Recode*, Dyson Gallery. Photo by Ollie Harrop, 2018.

Jade Montserrat is an artist based in Scarborough, England. She is recipient of the Stuart Hall Foundation Scholarship which supports her PhD (via MPhil) at IBAR, UCLan, and the development of her work from her Black diasporic perspective in the North of England. Jade works through performance, drawing, painting, film, installation, sculpture, print and text. Recent commissions include the 24-hour live performance *Revue* at the SPILL Festival of Performance (2018); a solo exhibition at the Bluecoat (2019) that toured to Humber Street Gallery (2019); and Art on the Underground, *Winter Night Tube* cover (2018). Iniva and Manchester Art Gallery have commissioned Jade as the first artist for the *Future Collect* project (2020).

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

When I had a studio at Crescent Arts between 2011–13, I began to grasp what performance is and what Live Art has the potential to be. I studied History of Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art and was the only Black person in my year group. I focused on eighteenth century art history but it wasn't until years later and happening upon a book in the local library about the slave trade that I began understanding my position in relation to African diasporic histories and the history of the transatlantic slave trade. Towards the end of my degree, I happened upon a book in the discount bin at the Barbican called *Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky* by Alexandra Monroe. I love this book. Everything in it still remains a mystery and foundation for what I now understand to be performance art and Live Art making.

During studying for an MA in Drawing at Norwich University of the Arts, I was introduced to Franko B's work and Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* in relation to drawing, the idea that drawing can be photography and can be performance – thinking through time and in opposition to

linearity, thinking through a spatiality of ideas in relation to history. I began reviewing books for King's College review of books: Kathy Battista's book *Renegotiating the Body* allowed me to delve deeper into works by Carolee Schneemann and Bobby Baker. A couple of years later, I made my first performance artwork at Bob & Roberta Smith's *The Art Party Conference*, which was hosted by Crescent Arts. I wasn't paid for this performance, neither were most artists making work there apart from 'named' artists. This was the first time I had been to something resembling a performance art festival.

These experiences all served to shape what I understand as the potentials for Live Art. I understand Live Art to be a probing of the conditions under which we work and live, encouraging experimental practices that aim to imagine new frameworks (such as structural change with and through governance). Live Art seeks to learn with others, to collaborate on unfolding the futures we would like to see, and drawing together the histories that got us here.

Once I had established what possibilities Live Art and performance-making opened up for me, I made moves to strengthen dialogue between myself and local artists, Webb-Ellis in particular. With their expertise and my exploratory ideas in relation to our immediate environment and the process of revealing to myself identities that bear witness to my African Diasporic heritage, we began to make performances to camera. The camera operated as witness and as a probe with which we could critique our own making, gaze and relationship. Relationships are generally the hardest thing we do in life – building them, nurturing them, understanding them in reference to the language that we use and our behaviours towards one another. Live Art offers the possibility to explore relationships through frameworks already established from an art context that ignite our curiosity and create safe routes of passage.



## Perspective: Jane Trowell, Platform

Jane Trowell is a cross-disciplinary arts educator and long-standing member of Platform, an award-winning collective, based in London, that brings artists, activists, researchers and campaigners together to make work on social and ecological justice. Platform's work includes campaigns, education courses, exhibitions, art events and publication projects. Platform has partnered with the Live Art Development Agency in various ways, including on its DIY programme. Jane has also led a series of initiatives with Live Art organisations focused on ethics, the arts and oil sponsorship.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your organisation?*

For me, as somebody from an arts background who's been involved with Platform in different ways for 30 years, Live Art has always been this incredible invitation to experiment and be outside formal spaces and formal convention. For Platform, disciplinary thinking has been part of the problem, not the solution. We need inter, trans, and intra trans disciplinary thinking to solve ecological problems; to solve social justice problems.

I think Live Art permits an approach of experimentation, an openness to bodies in space. This does connect very much to kind of activist mindsets or action mindset. It's like, okay, here's an opportunity. We're going to do something now. What is the performance of this opportunity?

There's also something about improvisation in Live Art practices, although not all Live Art practices. Obviously there are Live Art practices that are tremendously meticulously planned and timed and staged, and I understand that, but there is also a tradition around improvisation and responsiveness. That kind of ethos which asks: what do we actually need to do here that's going to do the job?

*How have organisations, initiatives, or networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of the organisation?*

In the 1990s, Platform was banging on the door of Arts and Business (formerly Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts) saying 'We have to talk about ethics and arts funding' and they weren't interested. This went on for years. The Live Art Development Agency, however, saw what was going on. They saw what Liberate Tate was doing as successful, a very highly visual performance art practice. They understood that Platform was involved in this family of practices around ethical sponsorship in relation to fossil fuels, and they had the genius idea to commission *Take the Money and Run*, a Study Room Guide that I wrote on ethics and business sponsorship of the arts. So much came from that. LADA, Artsadmin and Home Live Art, as part of their Arts Council England (ACE) Catalyst funding, booked Platform to run some workshops for them to help them develop their ethical fundraising policy, which they assiduously and carefully and painstakingly did.

Platform joined together with Live Art organisations to show solidarity when many environmental arts organisations had their funding cut in the 2012 ACE NPO funding round. We had many difficult meetings with ACE. And, again, hats off to the Live Art sector who drove this fight. It led to ACE issuing new policy guidelines requiring NPOs to undertake environmental and carbon audits. It's not everything, but it was a big achievement.



Activist Mel Strickland hands leaflet against Shell to a shareholder outside Shell AGM, London. Part of Platform's vigil for Action Saro-Wiwa. Photograph by Platform, 2014.



## Perspective: Joshua Sofaer

Joshua Sofaer is an artist who works mainly with performance and installation. He often sets up situations in which the response to an invitation for public participation is then incorporated as an aesthetic function of the piece. Equally comfortable working in a gallery, opera house, museum, public space, or private home, what draws Sofaer's diverse practices together is a concern with how audiences engage with the world. People's experience is key, as are the material cultures they choose to surround themselves with. Sofaer was a winner of the 2009 Bank of America Create Art Award, and the first Artist Fellow on the 2010–11 Clore Leadership Programme. He is an accredited Relational Dynamics Coach.

In 2007 Joshua made the piece *Name in Lights* for Fierce Festival in Birmingham. Although it is unusual for him to repeat work, he has employed the same strategy of celebrating uncelebrated people by calling for nominations and then making selected names visible in urban space in a series of five naming works over the last fifteen years.

*Name in Lights*, Fierce Festival, 2007  
*Rooted in the Earth*, Create, London 2009  
*Viver a Rua*, Porto, NEC/FITEI, 2010/11  
*Your Name Here*, St Helens,  
Heart of Glass, 2015  
*River Crossing*, Sacramento & West  
Sacramento, 2019/2020

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed this project?*

I think the main way that Live Art has informed this project is to give me permission to think that I am an artist who *could* make work like this. These pieces unsettle easy definitions of genre. While there is always a physical manifestation (an illuminated sculpture, a flowerbed, a street sign) which would seem to align the work with visual art, the strategy for the creation of that manifestation is performative, happening across cities in a series of

interactions, workshops, and marketing events that seem to align more with applied theatre. Live Art offers a permission to think in a way that would not be possible if I was working as a performance artist, for example, or even a visual artist. In this sense, Live Art offers a home for work that might otherwise find itself without one.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

Perhaps Live Art has made working with audiences something that is no longer burdened by the sense of worthiness that accompanies the term 'community art'. In fact, I think I am striving towards becoming a kind of community artist, but that term has, unfortunately, been forced to signify as something low ranking in the art world, and full of a particular form of social aesthetic that many of us wish to eschew. Live Art, then, allows us to work with communities while maintaining an openness to how that might operate, unencumbered by the dogma of a particular set of social, ethical, or aesthetic rules.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

Live Art hasn't really offered itself as a useful way of defining an artist, or even a genre of art practice. Rather it has been a permissive space for making, occupied by what seems pressing or urgent to those who co-opt it at any one time. In order for Live Art to maintain its value, it has to be open to alteration and shift. If it is allowed to crystallise into a single meaning, aesthetic, or approach, it will close down opportunities. So, at best, Live Art can forge new (and as yet undetermined) ways of thinking and making that might change the way we think about what is possible as art, and consequently in life.



Joshua Sofaer, *Name in Lights*, Fierce Festival, Birmingham.  
Photograph by Chris Keenan, 2007.



## Perspective: Kira O'Reilly

Kira O'Reilly is an Irish Helsinki-based artist. Her practice, both willfully interdisciplinary and entirely undisciplined, stems from a visual art background. It employs performance, biotechnical practices, writing and experimental media with which to consider speculative reconfigurations of *The Body* in its most expanded sense. She makes, writes, teaches, mentors and collaborates with humans of various types, technologies and non-humans of numerous divergences. *Kira O'Reilly: Untitled (Bodies)*, edited by Harriet Curtis and Martin Hargreaves, was published in autumn 2017 by Intellect Live.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

Live Art is like a gloriously strange non-biological family. There is little to no shared genetic material, but rather enormous numbers of metabolic, symbiotic affiliations and exuberant forces and co-operating

systems. Instead of being singular or defining, I consider Live Art an overarching term for a multitude and multiplicity of practices that primarily utilise liveness, but that do not conform to artistic, curatorial or even funding categories.

My first steps into performance were in the mid-nineties during an undergraduate degree in Fine Art in a department called 'Time Based'. Live Art was a term I encountered afterwards, around 1999. My work then was characterised by working with the materiality of physicality explicitly, and ideas and concepts around both *The Body* (discursive) and what it is to be bodily (experientially and socially).

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

My understanding and experience of Live Art was via initiatives created by organisations and curatorial/art directors, for example higher education degrees and festivals in places like Cardiff and Nottingham, the National Review of Live Art, and of course the Live Art Development Agency.

I moved back to Bristol following graduation at approximately the same time that Helen Cole took the reins of Live Art programming at Arnolfini. A community of artists and audience provided social and peer support around the programming Helen provided.

Other platforms and festivals that presented my work were invaluable; including Home Live Art, ANTI Festival of Contemporary Art, and SPILL Festival.

Given Rob La Frenais' long experience in curation in both performance art and art, science and technology, Arts Catalyst were conspicuous in their ability to work across both contexts and curated my piece *Falling Asleep With A Pig* for *INTERSPECIES*, which explored human and animal relationships.

Peer support and exchange has continued to be the vital continuum that enables my practice.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

Live Art as a series of tactical practices offers enormous possibilities for visionary and imaginative potentials – how humans might interact, communicate and be with.

Where Live Art perhaps falters is in its inability to move from more plural and expanded definitions of body and bodily and to encompass sensibilities and sensitivities that are not human or that agitate the assumptions of human. If Live Art practice can adjust and adapt to these constant reconfigurations, it will bring to the larger social dialogue examples of *how*.

How to conduct exploratory dialogues that stage useful ambivalences and happy ambiguities.

How to frame, cultivate and host *deep listenings* and being *with* what is rejected, indigestible and repulsive.

How to love alterities of embodiment in fluxing, changing damaged worlds.

How to recognise what is not seen, to acknowledge partial visions and blind spots.

How to merrily side step earnestness, do-gooding and favour the exuberant activism of inclusiveness.

How to widen the embrace of additivism, and not the diminishing cold comfort of singular positions, approaches and speculations.

Complexity and unlikely or anticipated connections.



Kira O'Reilly, *What if this was the only world she knew*. Photo by Sohan Ariel Hayes, 2018.

## Perspective: Kwong Lee, Manchester International Festival

*Animals of Manchester (including HUMANZ)* was an interactive Live Art experience created by Sibylle Peters (Theatre of Research) and Lois Keidan (LADA) for Manchester International Festival (MIF) in 2019. It posed questions about the relationship between humans and non-human animals. Audiences were invited to follow a trail through Whitworth Park and Gallery and take part in encounters with animals through a series of installations and performances, sharing ideas on how to improve relationships between species. Kwong Lee is a Producer at Manchester International Festival and gives his perspective as producer of *Animals of Manchester*.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed the Manchester International Festival?*

Manchester International Festival (MIF) commissions new works like *Animals of Manchester (including HUMANZ)* from artists. The ideas are developed at the beginning, with our creative leads, usually John McGrath, our Artistic Director, or Mark Ball, our Creative Director. When the idea has developed into something a bit more tangible, a producer is assigned to the project.

I worked in galleries before I worked with MIF and I'm quite interested in Live Art and socially-engaged practice. A lot of Live Artists that I know are much more issue based, focused much more on socio-political practices and liveness to engage with other people, as opposed to something that's object-based. I see those kinds of distinctions in terms of how Live Art works.

What was interesting in this process of working on *Animals of Manchester* was that I really saw and understood what Sibylle Peters and Lois Keidan (the lead curators) wanted to do, in terms of how Live Art can actively prod and provoke questions. The project wasn't performative only; it was actually very experiential for quite a lot of visitors. It was so immersive and so much bigger than maybe anything

else I've worked with before in terms of Live Art. It was in a number of sites in Whitworth Park, as well as in a few of the galleries at the Whitworth Art Gallery. There were quite a number of projects and artists involved – some of them have always worked with Live Art, like Ansuman Biswas, for example, but then there were others like Marcus Coates – his work has got performance in it, and he crosses over into different areas.

*What activities and strategies worked well in reaching and engaging audiences with Animals of Manchester?*

*Animals of Manchester* became like a festival within the festival. Because it was free, it had to speak to many different audiences, rather than just to a knowledgeable art kind of audience. The projects had to speak to four year-olds, to parents who are coming in, or somebody passing by. Although of course it existed in an art context of the festival and the gallery, it was also in the park. So actually, people could just come across it without having prior knowledge of it.

How the artists involved young people was really good. We quickly established that working with schools was one way of working with young people because these issues and discussions about equality, climate change and justice are live in a classroom. There was also a group of home-schooled kids within the network that the Whitworth works with, and they were able to participate in one part of the project, so that the project included kids not just in formal education, but kids who are outside of that too.

For instance, the young people made choices about the project. They were presented with some research and were able to make decisions on proposals. The kids were researchers, decision makers, and also presenters across the whole project.



*Animals of Manchester (including HUMANZ)* at Manchester International Festival.  
Photo by Chris Payne, 2019.



## Perspective: Lena Šimić and Tim Jeeves

Lena Šimić and Tim Jeeves are artists based in Liverpool.

Tim has been making performance work for the last fifteen years, with a particular focus on how narratives around disability and health are formed and shared. Between 2011 and 2016, he directed the Arts Council England-supported Giving in to Gift festival, 'an ongoing conversation around ideas of generosity and reciprocation'.

Lena is a transnational performance practitioner, art activist, pedagogue and scholar currently researching contemporary performance and the maternal. She was a co-organiser of the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home between 2008 and 2018.

Tim is a Labour Councillor for Clubmoor and Lena is a Labour Councillor for Anfield. They have collaborated together on various arts-activism projects in Liverpool, including The Free University of Liverpool, the Politics and Aesthetics Reading Group and the Artists4Corbyn artist collective.

*How have organisations, initiatives, or networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

Lena: The Live Art Development Agency (LADA) has been a crucial organisation because their DIY programme was a model that helped the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home develop some of its own methodologies. There are models from the DIY programme in particular that have transferred to some of the self-initiated projects that I've been involved with. For example, setting up Family Activist Network, as well as some of the projects that Tim and I have worked on together, like the Politics and Aesthetics Reading Group and the Free University of Liverpool.

In terms of organisations, the Bluecoat in Liverpool was important in the beginning

of my arts practice and Tamsin Drury and all the different organisations and initiatives she has been part of, like the greenroom and Contact Theatre in Manchester, as well as the Word of Warning programme.

Tim: The first thing that came to mind for me was also DIY, as an idea but also just the fact that it's lasted so long. Over the years, there's been a strong, ongoing creativity amongst those suggesting projects as well as in the curation of those projects. It's always interesting to see what there is, both in terms of what's out there in the wider ecology and also the opportunity to explore your own practice. We'd both been spending a lot of time making political work and doing activism, and our DIY, 'The Party Calls You', was an opportunity to reflect on our engagement with mainstream politics, on becoming councillors, with other artists who have similar interests.

I was also going to say the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home. It was established when I moved to Liverpool but was still relatively young. That mixture of being able to go around to people's houses and work on stuff together was a really good opportunity to just get things underway. Someone once said we don't come together to do projects; we do projects in order to come together.

*Thinking of a specific project that you have developed, what activities and strategies worked well in reaching and engaging audiences engaged with the project?*

Lena: I am thinking about the Artists4Corbyn project, which was created in 2017. It was a network of people and a red banner as the main prop. The banner functioned at different events as a prop for sites, for interventions, for site-specific performances. It created a bit of community in a way. Making new connections and going to picket lines and bringing art into those politicised spaces is one way to develop and work with audiences, to reach out for and develop new audiences.



Artists for Corbyn alongside Labour Party members and striking workers, fighting against 290 proposed job cuts, Camell Laird shipyard. Image courtesy of the artists, 2018.



## Perspective: Patrick Fox, Heart of Glass

Heart of Glass is an agency for collaborative and social art practice made with, of and for St Helens. Its programme is rooted in collaborative practice and embodies the principle of partnership. Its core values are founded on co-production with the community and the active participation of the collaborator, non-artist, audience and viewer in the creation of great art. People, both individually and within communities of place or interest, are central to their thinking and practice. Heart of Glass was made possible by an initial investment from Arts Council England through the Creative People and Places programme, and with the support of a consortium of local and regional organisations. Patrick Fox is the Director of Heart of Glass.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your organisation?*

There's a sense of boundless possibility that appeals to us in Live Art. One of our first major projects was with Joshua Sofaer, a project called *Your Name Here*. The project opened up a dialogue with our town about what constitutes public art as well as creating opportunities for civic-led active engagement in the formation of new work. It asked us to consider and question some of the forms or limitations of public art. That project became a platform from which to build an organisational approach or ethos that hinges on artists and communities, creating spaces of inquiry. For us, Live Art is very fertile ground for that type of possibility.

*How has Live Art as a strategy or form allowed you to experiment with how you work with audiences?*

The term audience has always felt a little bit jarring. What we're interested in is collaborative practice or social art practice and work that has a political emphasis, troubling the boundaries of power exchange on authorship and who gets to be part of those processes.

One of the things that's really exciting about the field of Live Art is the chance encounter, that rubs up against daily life and challenges some of the conventions of public space. Groups of young people working with Mark Storer arrived unannounced into our town to distribute flowers and invite people to march with them that afternoon on the town hall to declare a new town children's charter. French & Mottershead worked with a brass band in St Helens to create a public art sound installation that unfolded over a weekend and people encountered that in a very public way. All of those projects have at the heart of them a deep-rooted sense of shared ownership and collaboration.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art on social change?*

Some of the labels or constraints that we place on artistic practice feel out of step with the lived reality of how people are making work currently. There is a much more social turn or civic responsibility implicit in how artists are making work. That that has to do with a lot of things, whether it's social justice movements or reckonings around anti-racist practice or environmental challenges. There's an urgency there that Live Art is very well placed to lead and be in service to, which feels like a very exciting space for arts and cultural practice. There's a form of leadership from the underrepresented or the margins that can shift public discourse in a very productive way. Live Art, historically and currently, plays a big part in that discourse.



Kitty O'Shea, Heart of Glass. Photo by Stephen King, 2020.



## Perspective: Rosana Cade

Rosana Cade is an artist based in Glasgow who works primarily with live performance. Almost all of their work is collaborative, and takes place in different contexts, including theatres, galleries, urban public spaces, nightclubs and cabaret settings. Their work has been shown extensively in the UK, and they also regularly tour across Europe. Their participatory performance *Walking:Holding*, which explores intimacy in public spaces, has been touring since 2011, working with diverse groups of local people in each place. They are the co-founder of BUZZCUT and regularly collaborate with their partner as Cade & MacAskill.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

I think of Live Art as a queer form because it has this fluidity within it. To me, queerness is about imagination and invention outside of received or normative ways of doing things. Here's this form or this practice that asks you to think of new ways of doing things that are going to challenge the status quo. It's political and philosophical. I find that a very exciting way of working.

*How have organisations, initiatives, and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

I did the Contemporary Performance Practice course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) in Glasgow and the Arches was a really key venue for me. Also, earlier on in my career, the Marlborough in Brighton gave quite a lot of support. It felt like this amazing place to be as a queer artist with a connection to a queer scene, which I hadn't felt so much in Glasgow at the time. The SPILL National Platform was an opportunity to have my work seen by a lot of presenters. After I did the National Platform, I went for a meeting with Aaron [Wright] and Lois [Keidan] in the LADA Study Room, and they suggested all of these artists to look at. It was an amazing opportunity to expand

my knowledge and feel inspired. I should also mention the late Adrian Howells, because he was a huge influence and mentor for me and my practice in the early days.

When the National Review of Live Art finished, Nick [Anderson] and I started BUZZCUT. We'd lost this local community by not having this annual festival and we wanted to offer some opportunities. With the Arches closing, I realised the importance of a venue and a base for communities to gather and sustain themselves.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to experiment with how you work with audiences specifically?*

With Live Art, there is an opportunity to try something out live, with audiences participating. For example, *Walking: Holding* asks audience members to place themselves directly into a situation and be an active participant. You go for a walk through the city or the town on a predesigned route and you hold hands with a series of different people along the way on that route. There's no script. So the interactions are formed by you and the person that you're walking with. I first made it in response to some of my own experiences of same-sex handholding in public and not always feeling comfortable doing it. I wanted to think about the way our identity affects our experience with public space. But it's also an experiment in intimacy with strangers and creates this kind of future utopic experience of your city, where you're walking around and imagining that every stranger could be a companion or a hand-holder.

## Perspective: Sandra Corrigan Breathnach

Sandra Corrigan Breathnach is an interdisciplinary artist working mainly in performance art. Her practice includes elements of sculpture, drawing, photography, video and sound. Based in the North West of Ireland, she regularly collaborates with artists and organisations in Northern Ireland. She is currently the co-chair of Bbeyond, an organisation whose main objective over its 20 years of operation has been the promotion of performance art in Northern Ireland and beyond.



Sandra Corrigan Breathnach, *Bound - Unbound*, BIFPA 16. Photo by Rainer Pagel, 2016.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your approach?*

Live Art (and performance art, which is a term I use more often), can be viewed as a cultural strategy; it is a means to heighten awareness and communicate the possibility of social change through the expression of idea through action. Even if this action occurs only on a small scale, or has the ability to impact one person, it can be a powerful means of communicating beyond words.

My own approach is informed by this, beyond words, intuitive communication, and the idea of a freedom of expression (that is, not at the expense of others). I have always felt that I have never quite fitted in, awkward at times in my ability to connect and communicate. Perhaps the commonality that I have found of this human state is a connecting thread for a large portion of us who create Live Art or performance art. Perhaps it is the acceptance, appreciation and expression of difference that can be found at times under the umbrella of Live/Performance Art that gives a sense of connection and meaning, another way to communicate, which I find so important within my practice.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your work?*

Alastair MacLennan has had an immense impact on the development of my practice. He has been a light in the lives of many and his sincere supportive, caring way of being has enriched my life, both personally and in my artistic practice. Following a period of collaboration in 2018, Alastair and I created our performance installation exhibition *Breath And Blood* in the Burren College Gallery, County Clare. The exhibition included live performance, drawings, video, sound works and sculpture. Following *Breath And Blood*, we went on to create an eight-hour

collaborative performance, *Flux In Flow*, in the Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast, in 2019.

Another important collaboration that has had an impact both personally and on my practice was with the artist James King. In 2016 we created our performance installation exhibition *Pollenate* in Void Gallery, Derry. *Pollenate* was a combination of live performance, video, animation, photography and sound works.

The performance art organisation Bbeyond has had the largest impact on Live Art and performance art in Northern Ireland through the dedication of many artists over the years, creating opportunities through symposia, performance events, international hosting, workshops, exchange projects and monthly performance meets, which occur in outdoor spaces, within galleries and museums. This is an invaluable support for performance artists in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Belfast International Festival of Performance Art (BIFPA), organised by Brian Connolly (a founding member of Bbeyond) in conjunction with Ulster University, is another important festival that supports the work of Northern Irish and international artists.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

I think that Live/Performance Art has a lot to offer. It has the power to open our minds to new ways of thinking, and new ways of seeing and appreciating difference through the understanding that we are all human beings. It can transform perceptions, give courage, inspire endurance and paradoxically show vulnerability to be a strength, while empowering change.



## Perspective: Selina Thompson

Selina Thompson is the Artistic Director of STLtd and an artist and writer whose work has been shown and praised internationally. Her company makes work that is intimate, political and participatory, with a strong emphasis on public engagement; leading to provocative and highly visual work that seeks to connect with those historically excluded by the arts. She was featured in The Stage 100 Most Influential Leaders in 2018 and awarded the Forced Entertainment Award in 2019. Credits include BBC Radio, and theatres across the UK, Europe, Brazil, North America and Australia. She believes in the power of art and she is trying to build a life that feels like it embodies the changes she wants to make.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice/project/approach?*

For me, Live Art is what grounds my work in the political, enables the space to experiment and fail and provides me with a community of peers who I know to be rigorously committed to the same values.

This probably feels most apparent when I am making, foregrounding what the work is for, what we want it to do and who we want it to serve. How is it not just bourgeois wank? Increasingly it comes to play a role in how we approach funding, and even how we're thinking about things like HR, who we choose to work with, and organisational development. Our ongoing questions are 'where is the commitment to the radical? Is it even possible in this framework, and if it isn't, should we be doing it?'

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences and people who might be considered non-professionals?*

Doing away with the notion of virtuosity means that you can connect with non-professional performers on more of an even keel.

You're not descending from on high: anyone can do this. It also means that the process is valued equal to whatever the 'end point' is, so every element is planned with care. It keeps me accountable: Is this exploitative? Is this political? Am I actually able to see these participants when they enter the space?

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

One of the big shifts we're about to see is a push back against working with non-professional performers in ways that are exploitative, and I think it's going to throw a lot of people's financial models out; as they depend on those communities to secure funding but do very little in terms of meaningful exchange and real engagement with the reality of their lives. It's highly likely that Live Art is going to lead the way in that blending of art and life that moves past exploitation.

There is a strong trend of artists thinking about how their art does tangible, longer term things to bring about new worlds, and this requires a pushing up against bureaucracy within the arts in ways that Live artists are already doing.

I also think that as our national politics grow increasingly rightwing, it is Live Art that will increasingly call for accountability and integrity, and provide an alternative set of voices and narratives.

When I have TV meetings, I keep thinking what people will want to hear about is narrative, but it's not. The Live Art bit of my archive, the work that was more experimental and spectacle-led – that seems to be what people are interested in. The different relationships to intimacy have felt like something people have really wanted to see during the pandemic too.



Selina Thompson, *The Missy Elliott Project*.  
Photo by Richard Davenport, 2017.

**Perspective:**  
**Sex with Cancer**

(answered by Brian Lobel with Joon Lynn Goh,  
Sex with Cancer co-leads)



*Sex with Cancer* is a patient-led initiative that uses art and enterprise to hold a frank and honest conversation about illness and intimacy, so that people living with and beyond cancer can access advice and information about sex without shame, and with an eye to pleasure, fun and connection. *Sex with Cancer* has been conceived by friends, artists and former cancer patients Brian Lobel and Joon Lynn Goh in dialogue with a Steering Group of community activists, creative thinkers and professionals across sex, sexual health and cancer care.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed the project Sex with Cancer and your approach?*

*Sex with Cancer* is a project which combines art, research and enterprise, with the goal of creating the world's first sex toy shop that is owned, informed and operated by people living with and beyond cancer. The work is more than this, but that sentence sums the central issue quite concisely. I've always found that, with so much Live Art, the central issue or thrust of the work is succinct, conceptual and direct, but the ART comes in the execution, the contextualising, the situating and the artist/audience relationship. The very nature of the work is interdisciplinary which, to us, shares so much of its methodologies with Live Art. It takes radical forms, is unconcerned with which part is the art part, which is the activist or community-focused part, and calling it Live Art (or something derived from a Live Art tradition) helps embrace the interdisciplinarity and the slipperiness of definitions in which we find ourselves awash.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your project?*

The venues that are our formal partners (Battersea Arts Centre, Contact, Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts, and Wunderbar)

have long histories of supporting the development of Live Art alongside the rest of their portfolio. For these partners, it was easy to have a conversation about the overall work which INCLUDES but is not 100% focused around, one-off performances/gigs, but rather focused on the overall mission which an artistic approach feeds into.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

For me, Live Art always allowed me to find the form or format for the work which was appropriate to the story I was telling, the issue I was exploring, the relationship with an audience I was focused on. For this work, which is an advocacy programme, an educational resource, a Continuing Professional Development resource and a business, it might feel slightly different from the stage-focused or gallery-based work I've done in the past, but really, Live Art allows it just to *be what it needs to be*. We've stopped asking ourselves 'what is art?' 'what isn't art?' and we just pursue the work, the audiences and the impacts we want (and feel are necessary). This is an outlook that Live Art has always promoted.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

Live Art is a strategy more than a strictly codified set of practices. This openness allows projects like ours (which are focused on social change but use artistic methodologies of engagement) to flourish. For those people who do/make/practice theatre or dance or visual art in a more traditional sense, it is clear what IS and what IS NOT an artwork that fits those categories. For Live Art, however, it is the porousness of the definitions that allows for true experimentation, cross-pollination and community interaction.



## Perspective: Simon Casson, The Posh Club

Simon Casson is a co-founder and the producer for Duckie, an Olivier award-winning arts organisation with a programme of events that range from large-scale clubnights to immersive community theatre. Duckie use performance, culture and parties to empower communities. A queer-led group, they have had a regular clubnight at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London since 1995. Duckie also create socially-engaged events for other (sometimes marginalised) groups. The Posh Club is an afternoon tea party and performance event for older (60+) working class adults held regularly across London and the South East.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed The Posh Club?*

The Posh Club is a themed immersive experience. It is not just about what happens on the stage, but about the whole experience from when the guest walks in the door to when they leave, the whole four hours. There is a Narnia-like transcendent experience at work here. You know that saying 'what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas'? It's a bit like that at The Posh Club. Different rules apply, it's a mannerly world of elegance, esprit and decadent, fleshy fun.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your organisation?*

Duckie have always had a strong close relationship with Lois Keidan from LADA who has been very supportive of our work and helped us with resources and knowledge over the years.

Slowly, the Arts Council has come to accept that 'illegitimate' performance in short formats, rather than grand sermons in the art house, still have a lot of value and are often more culturally appropriate for working class and non-university educated audiences.

We are somewhat plugged into the scene of performance practice. The Posh Club's shtick is to mix Live Art and contemporary performance with popular forms and variety, such as music, comedy and dancing. For The Posh Club recently we have engaged artists such as Priya Mistry, Victoria Sin,

Harry Alexander, Pink Suits, Sam Reynolds, Richard Layzell, Marisa Carnesky, Levantes Dance Theatre, Vidya Patel, Azara, Tracey Smith, Legs 67. They tend to be at the 'tarty' end of Live Art, which is Duckie's style, rather than the serious-minded gallery based end of Live Art.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

The intersection between Live Art, queerness and working class communities is integral to the culture of The Posh Club. Queer people have always been present in working class communities, but without a fanfare or a formal placement, and we are carrying on this tradition. We are other, we are different. For our audience, incremental exposure to unusual performance has built up a trust where non-theatre going, working class, multi-ethnic audiences have come to expect the unexpected.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

Revolution is in the DNA of Live Art; it is about reinventing the wheel. It's a strategy to disrupt, rather than a set of ways of doing things. Live Art is inexplicably inexplicable, it's sublime and it's not completely straightforward. And it thinks about the world in a wonky way. And that's what I want theatre and art to be. I want it to be more messy.



Performers of PCDC Posh Club Dance Club. Photo by Peter Robertshaw.

## Perspective: Tim Bromage

Tim Bromage is a performer, writer and artist based in Cardiff. His work uses poetry, storytelling and magic to explore folk history and contemporary mythology. He creates live performance rituals, film work and museum demonstrations. He is a recipient of a Creative Wales Award and was an associate artist at Chapter, Cardiff.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice?*

I think of Live Art and performance art as practices that possess a commitment to research and materials, to a sound understanding of the material used to inform or create work. This is a result of studying on the time-based practice course at Cardiff School of Art and Design, where staff based significant emphasis upon this approach. I feel these ideals continue to inform my current work.

My current practice is primarily performance-based, and often draws upon ongoing research into the role of the raconteur as trickster figure, and oral historian. Props and costume are combined with text and stage magic creating fractured narratives. Within this context, the magical effect becomes a mode of symbolic demonstration, and paradoxically often a moment of honesty.

*How have organisations, initiatives and networks aligned with Live Art supported the development and impact of your practice?*

After leaving university there was a lack of critical discourse and training within my practice. As a result, I often made work that was unfocused. In 2001 I was selected for SPILL Festival where I presented *untitled*, a twenty minute performance, and then I was later selected for their Elevator programme. I benefitted greatly from the mentorship and guidance provided through this, working with artist and performer Jonathan Allen.

This was a bit of an epiphany and afterwards I actively began to seek both guidance and training. In 2015 I engaged in two DIY workshops run by LADA, 'Juke Boxing' with Marcia Farquhar and 'Excursions', on which I was the lead artist. The experience allowed me to take my practice in new directions, to be inspired by other artists, and to learn a variety of new skills. Since 2012 I have regularly been involved with the Experimentica festival in Cardiff, as both a performer and audience member. The festival has continued to provide a vibrant arena in which to engage with other artists and to present and critique my ideas.

The organisations I have engaged with (specifically Chapter, tactileBOSCH, LADA, and Artsadmin) have provided me with gentle guidance and support throughout my career. Within Wales there is a strong history of interdisciplinary performance including groups and organisations such

as Brith Gof, GoodCopBadCop, tactileBOSCH and Experimentica. These examples of cross-pollination have supported me to pursue a variety of methodologies, including spoken word, storytelling, and dance. It should be noted that the Arts Council of Wales has continued to support my practice throughout my professional career.

*What do you think the ideas, approaches and practices of Live Art could offer for the future of contemporary art and social change?*

I feel that the practices and approaches of Live Art exist because they need to. I remain unconvinced that Live Art should ever be adopted as a mainstream artform, lest it be subsumed into the morass of popular culture. I further doubt art's ability to change the world on any grand scale. My personal experience of people accidentally encountering Live Art is that the experience can be either transformative or disruptive (both options are valid). I believe that the strength of Live Art is in its transient or liminal nature, and in the subsequent creation of generous artist networks and organisations.



Tim Bromage, *The Death and Resurrection Show*, Photo by Roger Graham, 2020.



## Perspective: Vijay Patel

Vijay Patel is a performance artist and writer based in London. His artforms are interdisciplinary, ranging from Live Art, performance art and cabaret. The work he makes predominantly surrounds cultural identity, making autobiographical work around being a queer, British/Indian, working class, autistic person. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he began practicing in new ways that advocate for access; specifically, within neurodivergent communities. His work on the Freelance Task Force (2020) amounted to a best practice guide for new ways to better support neurodivergent freelancers. Through a recent Arts Council England Developing Your Creative Practice grant, Vijay has shaped a new role that sits alongside his performance practice, which is 'Neurodivergent access consultant'. In summer 2021, Vijay began developing a new performance work with his younger, autistic brother called *Brotherly, Otherly, Disorderly*, commissioned by Unlimited and supported by Colchester Arts Centre.



Vijay Patel, Photo by Holly Revell, 2018.

*Can you describe how Live Art has informed your practice/project/approach?*

*The Weighting Game* was the first solo performance I made. I made it in my final year of university and it was my first piece to start experimenting with form and Live Art practices. This piece awakened me to the significance and possibilities of using my body in the space, under the pressures of Indian cultural expectations and with the added complexities of queerness. There was a simplicity to the actions and tasks at play, which evoked many complex readings simultaneously. That was what first drew me to exploring Live Art further within my practice.

At the time, I was looking at artists such as Sheila Ghelani, Mem Morrison, Harminder Singh Judge and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. All of these artists inspired how I might continue to develop *The Weighting Game* and further Live Art projects. I see now that Live Art offered me an accessible way to perform, where I could be free to rewrite the rules within performance and create new ones. By accessible, I mean that Live Art offered me so much as an autistic person, I could create what was accessible to me.

*The Weighting Game* was the first time I felt I could tell my story in a different way. I felt free to experiment, play and grow within a nurturing community of artists. It was a deeply personal piece that stripped back the text and instead incorporated objects from my cultural heritage and adopted a task-based, durational form.

*How has Live Art as a strategy and artform allowed you to (experiment with how you) work with audiences?*

Over the years, I have constantly thought about my relationship with my audience and I think that still shifts from project to project. As an artist who makes personal and political

work, I'm often thinking about how close I'm wanting to bring them into my story and my identity. In my solo show, *Sometimes I Leave*, I hold Q+As as a form within the show. This was a form I wanted to experiment with as it allowed me to have agency over how I communicate with them and how they communicate with me – a very important thing for an autistic person. I think this comes back to how I think of Live Art as rewriting rules, pre-conceptions of audience experience, and how the artist mediates that experience through their body and the positioning of objects in the space, as well as what that signifies. In *The Weighting Game*, the audience watched me lift a 20kg sack of rice above my head for 20 minutes. It was extremely visual.

I think that Live Art as a strategy and artform has allowed me to think carefully about what I want the audience to feel and be conscious about how the form instigates those feelings.

# 04

## Conclusions



Adam Patterson, *Looking for 'Looking For Langston', Edge of an Era*, Live Art Development Agency. Still from video, courtesy of the artist, 2018.

**Section One:** Summary of Findings

**Section Two:** Opportunities for Action



# Section One: Summary of Findings

## Key Structures

- The Live Art Development Agency has been central to advocacy for and development of the Live Art sector in the UK.
- Public funding is an essential component of funding for organisations and individuals working with Live Art.
- Practitioners involved in the Live Art sector are often delivering beyond capacity to demonstrate making the most of available resources.
- Live Art UK is a useful resource for some but the criteria for membership is not clear.
- Artist-led initiatives are fundamental to the flourishing of practices within the UK Live Art sector.
- Live Art often takes place in non-traditional spaces and places and artists working with Live Art experiment with new aspects of participatory practice according to these contexts.
- The Live Art sector relies heavily on festival culture.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art often feature and/or receive support from spaces and places dedicated to artistic disciplines outside Live Art.

## Creating and Making

- Artists working with Live Art are interdisciplinary and value collaboration with individuals and organisations outside of the arts.
- Artists working with Live Art value research and process-based approaches, which allow artists to experiment with form and different ways of working.
- There is rich and varied provision of professional development for artists within the UK Live Art sector, delivered through formal organised activity as well as peer support.
- There has been limited professional development provision for writers, curators and producers working with Live Art.

## Higher Education

- Live Art in the UK has both benefited from and contributed to the teaching, research and development of experimental, performance practices within higher education.
- People who work in the Live Art sector are highly qualified.
- Higher education has played an important role in supporting and cross-subsidising organisations and individuals working in the Live Art sector.
- Resources for arts provision within higher education, including departments that work with Live Art, are under particular stress at this time.

## Audiences and Influence

- Live Art in the UK has local, national and international reach, with clusters around London, the North West and Scotland, and in urban centres.
- Artists working with Live Art in the UK undertake hyperlocal activity.
- Collaboration and participation are key audience development strategies for artists and organisations working with Live Art.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art experiment with how young people can be equal collaborators in creative practices and processes.
- Practitioners working with Live Art value inter- and intra-regional networking and collaboration.
- The UK Live Art sector has supported the documentation and archiving of practices that have wider significance for contemporary art.

## Diversity

- Individuals participating in the UK Live Art sector are diverse in relation to ethnicity, race and disability, and the sector does better than the creative and cultural industries as a whole.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art and queer culture have been particularly prominent in the UK Live Art sector.
- Live Art practice and disability arts have informed and exerted significant influence on one another.
- Historically, the UK Live Art sector has not supported ethnically diverse leadership.
- The UK Live Art sector supports artistic practices that contribute to discourse and intersectional, holistic approaches to addressing equity, access and inclusion.

## Sustaining and Organising

- Individuals in the UK Live Art sector hold multiple roles and many make less than 50% of their income from working in the sector.
- The UK Live Art sector is supported by freelancers, part-time, and fixed term workers.
- The UK Live Art sector is supported by self-subsidy and much of the work undertaken, including artist commissions, is underpaid.
- Organisations in the UK Live Art sector are predominantly small with small staff numbers.
- The UK Live Art sector has a track record of successful partnership working and network collaborations.

## Post-March 2020 Conditions

### Key considerations to take forward:

- COVID-19 has highlighted the opportunity and need to build on knowledge and resource-sharing practices to support more inclusive and accessible working within the UK Live Art sector.
- The UK Live Art sector has demonstrated the value of digital for distribution of Live Art and artform development.
- Artists and organisations working with Live Art in the UK are in need of clear guidance to navigate the impacts of Brexit on both in-bound and out-bound touring and international mobility.
- The UK Live Art sector will need to re-think how international funding and partnerships operate in light of Brexit and reduced access to European partnerships, co-production and funding opportunities.
- The UK Live Art sector has a valuable role to play in decolonising artmaking practices and investing in diverse-led spaces.
- Artists, projects and organisations working with Live Art in the UK have identified the importance of addressing racial equity in the sector.

# Section Two: Opportunities for Action

## Key Structures

Assess and address the future needs, structure and resourcing of Live Art UK, including how the network works with artists and organisations who are not currently members. Doing this will support the impact and resilience of the sector.

Building on the central role that festivals play in the Live Art sector, there is an opportunity for deeper research and further regional partnership working to provide locally accessible, year-round artist development. This will support creative and organisational development that is relevant, dynamic and ambitious.

Further sectoral partnership work should be developed and resourced in dialogue with non-Live Art specific cultural spaces and organisations to better support and receive artists working with Live Art.

## Creating and Making

Funders should take up the opportunity to identify Live Art as an artform and discipline within grant funding processes and delivery plans. This will help draw attention to the important role that Live Art plays in broader artform development.

Resource and establish affordable, dedicated, accessible creating and making spaces, outside higher education, to significantly benefit the research and development of practice-based, non-outcome based artforms including Live Art.

Develop better frameworks within funding programmes to reflect the importance of process-based creation. This will support the development of artists and organisations to be more innovative, develop knowledge and be dynamic across a variety of contexts and communities.

Investment in the development of digital in the UK Live Art sector, including pre-application support for funding calls, specialist training, and upskilling artists and practitioners to explore digital creative processes.



This will support innovation in the artform specifically, as well as the exploration of new forms of relationship and connection with audiences.

## Higher Education

Instigate further partnership working between Live Art sector organisations and higher education, in order to support local, regional and national knowledge and development of Live Art practices.

Increased investment in the development of creative education opportunities, both inside and outside formal education structures, so that young people can engage with Live Art and expand the creative development pathways and opportunities available to them.

## Audiences and Influence

Increase resourcing of networking, making and presenting activity locally, regionally and nationally across the UK. This should include:

- Researching models for inter-regional ways of working, such as sustained, appropriately-resourced audience development activities that support the presentation of Live Art by independent artists and small-scale organisations.
- Initiatives to share knowledge, resources and labour with non-Live Art specific institutions/contexts to better develop artists/cultural workers, the artform and audiences.
- Bolstering hyper-local and regional networks, especially rural touring, which will support the quality and ambition of Live Art for local artists, organisations and audiences.

Further investment in writer development programmes and support for writing about Live Art outside of festival contexts and higher education, such as in an online magazine focused on Live Art, to strengthen audience experience and engagement with Live Art practices.

The UK arts councils, including the British Council, should collaborate more extensively with one another and with relevant trusts and foundations to support the work of Live Art nationally and internationally. This could include collaborative funding programmes, partnership working to support national and international visibility of Live Art, and a commitment to a further iteration of a Live Art sector review that builds on the findings and opportunities for action in this report.

## Diversity

Investment and commitment in sectoral organisational development programmes is required to further support a significant shift in equity as it relates to individuals with protected characteristics and those impacted by migration and socio-economic factors.

Increased access, mentoring and leadership development provision is needed across the Live Art sector to improve recruitment, retention and progression of individuals from historically underserved communities.

## Sustaining and Organising

Establish recommended rates of pay for non-traditional artforms, such as Live Art, to ensure more transparency and equity on pay and working conditions across all roles and activities in the sector, from cleaners to programmers and from freelance to associate artists, ensuring that people are paid properly and addressing racial, gender and disability pay gaps. This will support the development of a more inclusive and representative workforce in the Live Art sector.

Work with partners across the cultural sector to develop mechanisms for artists, and all workers in the cultural sector, to report poor pay and working conditions to funders.

Support for artists, practitioners and sectoral organisations working with Live Art to explore emerging and alternative models of governance and organisational structures (such as co-operatives and community benefit societies). This will enable Live Art practices to dynamically respond to current models of practice and innovate in light of the current challenges faced by the UK Live Art sector and arts and culture more broadly.

# 05

## Artist and Writer Commissions

Artist Commissions  
Writer Commissions



## Introducing the Commissions

Across the following pages you will experience new works by artists and writers that have been especially commissioned by the Live Art Development Agency for the *Live Art Sector Research - A Report Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* project.

From the outset of this unprecedented research project, LADA and Live Art Sector Research team understood that the voices of artists and writers were critical to any mapping and imagining of Live Art's achievements, challenges, potentials and hopes. It felt essential that an enquiry into Live Art 'histories' and 'futures' should represent and reflect Live Art *thinking* and *practice* by embodying the ideas, experiences and positions of those working with, and within, Live Art. So, alongside the rigorous and extensive surveys, focus groups, literature reviews, case studies, and interviews undertaken by the research team, LADA has also commissioned a host of artists and writers to create a body of new texts and artworks that collectively contextualise and complement the research project's findings and recommendations.

Four artists were invited to create responses to the idea of Live Art's histories and futures, with open briefs encouraging them to work in whatever forms they wanted, be it film, performance to camera, audio, writing, or something else entirely.

Artists Alexandrina Helmsley and Aaron Williamson were each invited to think about the impact of Live Art's histories on themselves and on their practice, and how a sense of history might live within their work. They both chose to make performance-based films that were created through two very different forms of collaboration – Alexandrina working with creative email exchanges with the research team and LADA staff for her poetic *My Heart Is Mine as It Is Yours and Ours*, and Aaron collaborating with seven local residents in Oxford who hosted, and filmed, his *Art De-LIVE-Ries in Lockdown* performances on their doorsteps in March 2021.

Looking in the other direction, artists Jamal Gerald and Anne Bean were each invited to think about what the futures of Live Art might look like and do, their hopes and fears, and the difference Live Art could make to a future. Jamal responded with the text work *I Hope* – a provocative litany of the many ways that Live Art fails Black artists and Jamal's hopes for a different, and more equitable, future. Anne also chose to work in film. She wanted 'many of the voices and strategies that I recognise as embodying positive, relevant trajectories towards the futures of Live Art, to speak out' and so she invited several Zambian artists, including Agness Yombwe, Serah Chibombwe & Marita Banda, and Gladys Kalichini, to join her in making their own films. These sit alongside Anne's contribution, *Futures*.

The commissioned artworks can be experienced on the Live Art Sector Research project website, but we offer a flavour of the artists' works across the following pages.

Complementing the commissioned artworks, writers Tim Etchells, Annie Jael Kwan, and a partnership of Phoebe Patey-Ferguson and An\*dre Neely were invited to respond to the overarching questions framing the Live Art Sector Research project: the contribution of Live Art to Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity, the influence of Live Art on talent development, on mainstream culture, and on challenging practices and approaches to risk. They were also specifically invited to address the concepts of Live Art histories, futures, and *now*.

We asked Tim Etchells to consider questions such as how the histories of Live Art are felt in the work of artists or in places, spaces or moments; how Live Art's histories have influenced other practices and thinkings; what and whose histories have been excluded or omitted from received understandings of Live Art; and why the history of Live Art would be considered significant (and to who). Tim's essay, *a between, an outside, and a centre all at the same time, some notes on the UK's Live Art sector*, positions Live Art as the 'lo-fi, punk, outsider zone' in which artists could 'experiment with form and content far away from the kinds of dismal interests and priorities that drive (dive) and creatively impoverish the so-called mainstream.'

Annie Jael Kwan was invited to consider what the futures of Live Art might look like and do, what kinds of spaces and places it might be located in (and who else might occupy those), what the future of Live Art could do that the past neglected to, and what difference Live Art could make to a future. Annie's essay, *Live Art Futures*, considers these questions through the lens of a range of Asia-Art-Activism projects specifically featuring Asian and diaspora artists whose practices reflect diverse Live Art approaches, and for whom 'Live Art offered experimental forms where they could explore issues of representation, visibility, community, care and solidarity.'

Phoebe Patey-Ferguson and An\*dre Neely responded to the cultural moment in which the Live Art Sector Research project is being undertaken – the current Live Art landscape of the UK and particularly the impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and the work of the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020. Their essay, *NOW IT IS NOW*, is structured in five sections, each taking inspiration from Anne Bean's 2019 'Live Art' wordplay - Live Art, Lives Art, Evil Art, Vile Art, and Love Art and concluding that 'Live Art, as it exists now, for us, here, is to love, to feel, to share, to believe, to try, to hope, the friction of our bodies being and becoming.'

The three commissioned essays are printed in full across the following pages and also available on the Live Art Sector Research project website.

LADA and the Live Art Sector Research team are hugely grateful to all the artists and writers for their generous and inspirational responses to our invitations to create these new works.

Enjoy.

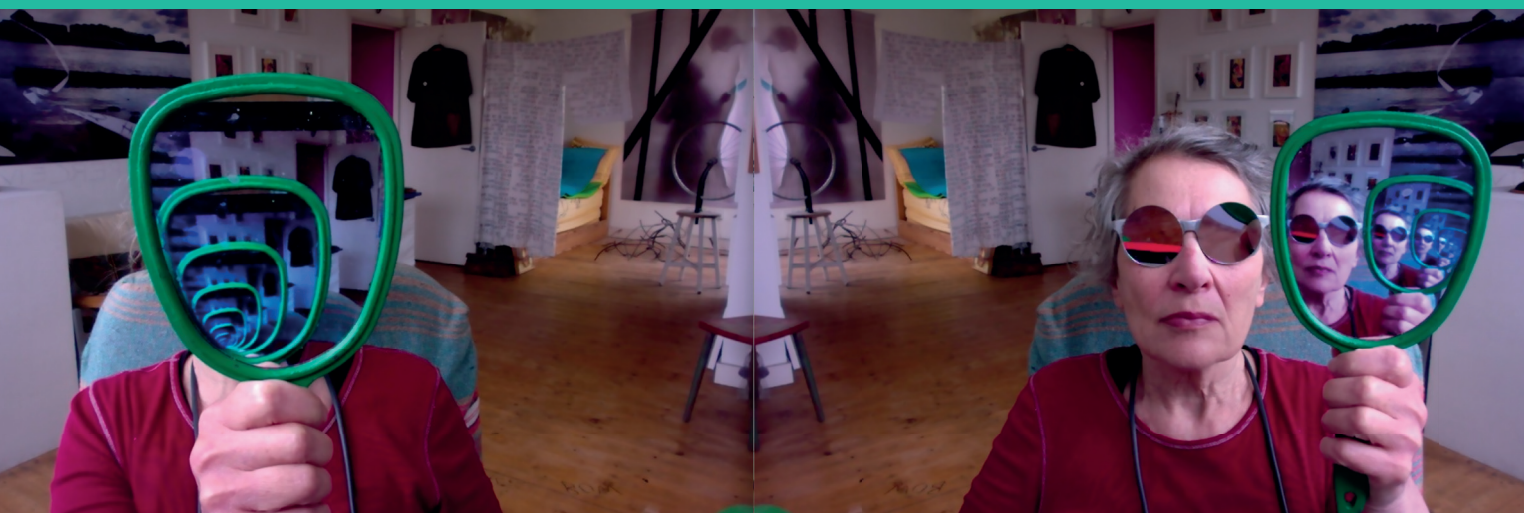




Alexandrina Hemsley, *My Heart Is Mine as It Is Yours and Ours, Yewande 103*. Image courtesy of the artist, 2021.



Aaron Williamson, *Art De-LIVE-Ries in Lockdown*. Composite image courtesy of the artist, 2021.



Anne Bean, *Heterotopia*. Image courtesy of the artist, 2021.

— *When are we going to start discussing setting fire to AD contracts? I'll wait.*

— *But I keep thinking about all institutions burning down. I have this obsession with setting things on fire.*

— *I hope in the future we look back on when we lit the matches.*

– Jamal Gerald



Jamal Gerald, *Dogmatic*. Photo by Stephen Daniels, 2018.



# a between, an outside, and a centre all at the same time

## some notes on the UK's Live Art sector

Tim Etchells

In the early 1990s, Joe and Christine Lawlor were collaborating as Live Artists under the name Desperate Optimists. They're feted filmmakers now, which already speaks to the way that the sector often provides a permanent or temporary spiritual home for different creative impulses and practices. In a talk I attended back then, Joe and Christine spoke about a bramble patch upon which they had played as kids, a zone on the peripheries of adult supervision, somewhere between a playground, an ad-hoc home science lab and a social experiment putting kids in charge. It was something akin to what philosopher and theorist Hakim Bey, a year or two before, had christened a Temporary Autonomous Zone, a place where, by common agreement of those present, established rules of behaviour and interaction are suspended and a new order or orders may be temporarily inhabited and explored. When I heard Joe and Christine speak about this actual (but nonetheless psychic) bramble patch, I recalled a similar space at the end of the street I grew up on – a wasteground arena bordered by road and barren field, the site of copious adult fly-tipping and unsupervised juvenile mischief, a place for lighting fires and unruly yelling and singing, for kids taking dares to do this or that, for stone throwing at discarded bottles, public urination and occasional fights. I guess most childhoods have an equivalent space, a periphery reserved for unsanctioned experimentation, risk taking and the redefinition of reality through action, through what we now might think of as performance.

To my mind the arts scene in the UK has its own equivalent of that space too – in the form of Live Art.

Live Art, in these terms, is the lo-fi, punk, outsider zone in which on relatively low or no budget, performance-makers and artists have seized or created for themselves a possibility to experiment with form and content far away from the kinds of dismal interests and priorities that drive (dive) and creatively impoverish the so-called mainstream. There is a generative force to the work born out of this space – a force which goes, obviously, in lots of contradictory directions and which intersects with quite different desires, needs and intentions. Broadly speaking, it shares an interest in the art of serious playfulness or playful seriousness as well as an interest in presenting viewers or participants with artistic encounters that go beyond and outside those offered by more typical fare. To be clear though, this going beyond is as often rooted in listening and intimacy as it is in spectacle or brash public address, since Live Art has (often, but not always) explored the possibilities of deep connection and conversation with its audiences at the expense of scale – commercial or otherwise.

Historically – in this version of the story at least – Live Art emerges in the UK performance scene in the late 80s and early 90s as an umbrella term to grasp the polyphony of approaches by artists presenting performance in regional UK

venues such as Midland Group (Nottingham), Leadmill (Sheffield), Third Eye Centre (now CCA Glasgow), Prema Arts Centre (Gloucestershire), Greenroom (Manchester) and festivals such as the National Review of Live Art (Nottingham/Glasgow/London), Hull Time Based Arts' ROOT (Hull), NOW (Nottingham), etc. Some of the artists presenting work in these contexts found their place by virtue of being unwelcome, unrecognised or misunderstood elsewhere. Others were proactively seeking an exit from restrictive single disciplines in which they had been working, stepping away from theatre, dance, performance art or poetry to transcend the perceived limitations and definitions of those forms, whilst others simply drifted in, finding the particularities or idiosyncrasies of their work more or less welcomed in this emerging space, which was (and is) somehow a between, an outside, and a centre all at the same time. Other artists meanwhile found shelter in Live Art as they shifted from further distinct areas of cultural production – video artists, performance poets and writers, social and community activists and cabaret artists, DIY pop and experimental music makers, performers from queer club culture and the experimental end of stand-up – all of them drawn to the relatively 'unsupervised' zone of Live Art, simply because it was open and receptive to a range of different aesthetics and agendas that people brought with them. This broad narrative – which situates Live Art somewhere between cultural testbed and porous space of psychic overspill – goes a good way towards explaining the aesthetic and other diversity of the field and its capacity for reinvention and transformation over the decades since early 1980s.

A place of refuge for artists who don't find place in other spaces, Live Art has proved a valuable tool with which to address (and at times critically extend) the Arts Council's Creative Case for Diversity. In this sense the Live Art scene in 2021 is undoubtedly different than the one that emerged some forty years ago. Indeed, one of the scene's strengths is its propensity for transformation, allowing it to respond with relative ease – thanks to its flexibility and resilience – to some of the new (or previously neglected or overlooked) urgencies that come with the social, economic and political realities of twenty-first century pre-and-now-post-Brexit Britain.

Live Art has long been a space for queer artists and it's a space in which the importance of anti-racism and ethnic and economic diversity have been on the agenda for a long time. At the same time, the practices and experience of artists with disabilities, artists approaching questions of class, gender and sexual identity as well as those emphasising participation, community and engagement have all been explored in significant and sustained ways by those in the sector. Live Art, however, isn't a utopia – there's more urgent work for the sector to do, especially around diversity and inclusivity. There's more work to do thinking about what and who this space excludes, omits, passes over, neglects or does violence to and about how the absences in the sector's history, and in its current cohort, can be addressed.

It's also worth flagging that the de-centred space of Live Art has allowed artist-led approaches to flourish. Its largely non-institutional, non-hierarchical tendencies also ensure that very different kinds of work can exist and prosper in the field.

It's a broad church, as they say, and that's one of the factors that defines and underwrites its importance and effectiveness. Live Art is a constellation, not a singularity. It's a space of contradiction. And it's a space that allows for difference: of approaches, of intention, of audience, of kinds of relation.

As Live Art showers energy and invention like sparks into the wider cultural arena, its broad contribution to talent development in the arts presents a complex political question. In the first place, part of the impact and importance of the sector lies in the way that it engages with talents (skills, impulses, ways of making and being) that no one has previously identified as such. Indeed much of the scene's energy is about recognising, celebrating and giving space not just to new talents but also to new kind(s) and categories of talent. Live Art is full of idiosyncratic talents that there is in the first place no proven 'need' for and certainly no broad expectation of in the culture. But these are also the talents, the artistic positions and endeavours, which in the end can prove vital as guides to the troubled realities we are navigating and living in.

In any case, the sector's continuous experiment casts a long shadow and the diverse aesthetic and communicative strategies developed in its dirty fecund bramble patch always find a way to flower, weed, burst, rage and blossom their way out into all kinds of unlikely ground elsewhere. To people working in the sector this kind of creative knock-on is often understood with ambivalence as a kind of vampirism, whereby mainstream appropriation of Live Art's strategies typically mistakes their true purpose, missing the depth and significance of their affect in the process. Whatever their undoubted influence, artists working in Live Art are not making their projects as research and development for something else – something later, something bigger, something 'better' by someone 'better'. They are undertaking their work for its own sake, in the deep and serious belief that it needs doing, here and now, and that it needs doing in precisely the ways in which they are doing it, for and with the audiences they are working in relation to.

## LIVE ART 'Futures'

Annie Jael Kwan

The discussion of Live Art in relation to Arts Council England's 'Creative Case for Diversity', and its relative success in framing more diverse artistic approaches in the UK has been noted.<sup>99</sup> This sits alongside the general critique, in line with mainstream institutions, with regards to its shortcomings in efficacy of creating more visibility for practices beyond a Eurocentric focus, and the lack of substantial structural reform such that existing exclusionary power dynamics and relations remain intact.<sup>100</sup> I accepted the invitation for this Live Art 'Futures' commission with the intention to broaden the cultural topography of the Live Art Sector Review that had noticeably, in its interim findings and discussions, omitted the many UK and international Asian diaspora practices. However, as the scale of this commission occludes the possibility of a broader survey or in-depth examination of Asian diasporic practices, this essay offers a summary of several projects featuring Live Art from Asia-Art-Activism's 2019-2020 programming, to provide examples as to how Asian diaspora practices and Live Art have mutually engendered creative and critical development.

Asia-Art-Activism (AAA) is an interdisciplinary, intergenerational research network. As its operational model is continually evolved by its Associates consisting of curators, artists and researchers interested in 'Asia', this spotlight is particularly cogent for making visible a complex intersection of diversity, and shifts the emphasis away from the binary conjunctions of thinking in relation to cultural diversity with respect to exterior/interior, mainstream institutions/alternative sites, and the UK/and beyond. As a Singapore-born, UK-resident independent curator and researcher, this report also reflects my professional investment in the continued enrichment of the Live Art sector that is interlaced with concerns for its ongoing sustainability. AAA's risk-taking and experimentation with technological platforms was prescient to the pandemic drive of the art world online. This piece offers broader reflection on this embrace of technological innovation that brings expansion of the definition of Live Art, and the wider inclusion of audiences via cross-border networks.

- <sup>99</sup> Jerri Daboo, 'The Arts Britain still Ignores?', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 38/1 (2018), pp.3-8; and in Nicholas Tee, 'As the "world's leading organisation for Live Art", how does the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) make visible Live Art practices that take place beyond the UK?', Unpublished report, 2019.
- <sup>100</sup> Fisher, Jean, 'Cultural Diversity and Institutional Policy,' Third Text, 2013, <http://thirdtext.org/cultural-diversity-and-institutional-policy>. It is noted that at the time of this writing, LADA has taken steps towards attempting to widen the scope of visibility of practices and implementing structural reform. Eg. the Southeast Asia Performance Collection, donated by curatorial initiative, Something Human in 2017, that holds primary artworks and documentation in relation to Live Art practices in Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines and Singapore; the Study Room publication, *Timely Readings: A Study on Live Art in Australia*, launched in 2019 by Madeleine Collie and Sarah Rodigari, with its poetic analysis of Live Art traces in Australia via the archive of RealTime magazine's descriptive art writing. More recently, in 2020, Director Lois Keidan announced a change of leadership.



Catalysed by the opportunity for residency space at Raven Row, AAA was launched in 2018 as a loose network that brought together individual practices that reflected the complex scope of Asia in the UK and beyond. AAA was able to utilise the shared gallery for its many public events, including the four hour Live Art programme, *what gets stuck in the eddy goes around and around*,<sup>101</sup> where audience members were allowed to drop in and leave at any time during the span of the programme, and some would circulate and linger in the space. The programme presented six concurrent durational performances by artists Kelvin Atmadibrata, Bettina Fung, Ada Hao, Quek Jia Qi, Mengting Zhuo, and the duo, Burong and Eunjung Kim, that explored the differentiated yet overlapping anxieties of lived Asian diaspora and migrant experiences. Atmadibrata's performance gestured towards queer erotic imaginaries against image projections of formal English topiary gardens, connecting personal memories from Jakarta to the UK. Simultaneously, Fung enacted her drawing tribute to Chinese migrant artist Lee Yuan-Chia's twenty-six year sojourn in Cumbria before his death. Ambivalent reconfiguring of the diaspora body was manifested via Burong and Kim's collaborative viscous oozing with sweet-smelling chewing gum to create sticky entrapment, whereas Hao's alter-ego performance donned a cyclopic corporeal apparatus to create a fictive all-seeing, archiving post-human subjectivity. Further explorations of somatic and subconscious conditions were offered by Quek and Zhuo – the former invited participatory sharing of discomfort, whereas the latter facilitated readings of the Six Crosses symbolism based on the I-Ching system to explore answers to personal dilemmas.

While varied diaspora and migrant subjectivities were co-represented in this space (tracing multiple trajectories from East/Southeast Asia), the audience experienced a range of affective, visceral and relational encounters that employed the use of sound, smell, image, touch and space. In this scenario, Live Art reaffirmed its expedient capacity for expressing an intersectional and experimental presentation of performing bodies without seeking to equalise or flatten the performances – an inclusivity further supported by its relatively economical production costs (in comparison to other media) that keeps barriers to entry of participation low, allowing both established and younger artists to participate. Live Art arguably provided an open frame for these unresolvable variegations – visibilising the embodied diversity of histories, influences and contexts, while holding a space for exploratory enunciations and relations.

Another AAA project, *Being Present*, extended this deployment of Live Art to enable a conceptual space for complex and abstracted Asian diaspora and migrant concerns to occupy institutional spaces where Asian diaspora narratives and practices are less represented. *Being Present* brought three Live Art performances by artists, Ada Hao, Bettina Fung and Nicholas Tee, in response to *Speech Acts: Reflection-Imagination-Repetition*, an exhibition presented at the

<sup>101</sup> This programme curated by Annie Jael Kwan, was presented as part of the three-day mini festival, SEA Currents in 2019, hosted and led by Asia-Art-Activism.

Manchester Art Gallery.<sup>102</sup> The performances connected with ongoing questions and issues raised in the exhibition regarding the under-acknowledged contribution of diaspora and migrant artists, and highlighted questions with regards to diversity and inclusivity in art histories and institutions. Chinese artist Hao's intervention splintered the authoritative curatorial narrative with the reading of poetic fragments and sound glitches. Hong Kong-born British artist Fung performed her poignant drawing tribute to Lee Yuan-Chia in front of the reconstructed window of his Cumbrian museum in the gallery space. Singaporean artist Tee invited the audience to scrutinise his yellow-painted visage covered with gold leaf. This performance recalled his fellow countryman, Lee Wen's experience of racism while in the UK, which led to the creation of Lee's iconic Journey of a Yellow Man performance, while gesturing towards the contemporary increase of students from East Asia as part of an aggressive recruitment drive in higher education for increased revenue.<sup>103</sup> AAA practitioners harnessed Live Art as a modality of production that reached across diaspora contemporaneous concerns and histories to enact their occupying of institutional space for Asian diaspora narratives and practices. The curator and artists were subsequently invited by the editors, Sarah Victoria Turner and Hammad Nasar, of Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art to adapt their performances for its *British Art Studies* digital cover collaboration – a project that arguably acknowledged the entanglement of Live Art and Asian diaspora artistic narratives within the broader framework of British art history.<sup>104</sup>

The Paul Mellon Centre digital commission occurred in tandem with AAA's experimentation with technology as it had begun its AAA Radio<sup>105</sup> strand of digital roundtables and experimental audio pieces in the same year. In 2020, as the pandemic resulted in restrictions to global travel and closures of public institutions and spaces, AAA quickly shifted its community meetings online and adapted its curatorial methodology to present its digital multidisciplinary programme, *Till We Meet Again IRL*,<sup>106</sup> which featured fifty-two contributors, and included Live Art works adapted for the reconfiguring of spatial sensibilities of the digital realm. In particular, UK-based Singaporean artist Lynn Lu's *36 Questions That Lead to Love* explored intimacy and distance via one-on-one performances on the Zoom conference platform, and for her participatory performance, *Not This Future*,<sup>107</sup> Korean diaspora artist Youngsook Choi gathered thirty-nine

<sup>102</sup> *Speech Acts: Reflection-Imagination-Repetition* was curated by Hammad Nasar with Kate Jesson, and exhibited at the Manchester Art Gallery in 2019. *Being Present* was curated by Annie Jael Kwan, and funded by Something Human.

<sup>103</sup> In 2019, a briefing at the University of the Arts London, reported that 60% of the university income was derived from students from East Asia.

<sup>104</sup> Nasar, Hammad & Turner, Sarah Victoria (eds.) 'London, Asia, Exhibitions, Histories,' *British Art Studies* 13, 2019, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale Center for British Art, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-13>

<sup>105</sup> AAA Radio was initiated by Annie Jael Kwan in collaboration with DJ and curator, Cuong Pham, and funded by Something Human and Arts Council England.

<sup>106</sup> *Till We Meet Again IRL* was co-curated by Annie Jael Kwan, Arianna Mercado, Cuong Pham and Howl Yuan, and funded by Something Human, the Bagri Foundation and Arts Council England.

<sup>107</sup> *Not This Future* was commissioned by Asia-Art-Activism/Something Human, with the Bagri Foundation and Arts Council England, with additional support from Heart of Glass.

digital grief offerings from Asian and diaspora collaborators all over the world as a memorial for the Essex 39 tragedy that itself unfolded at an illegal attempt to cross borders. These segments were played online alongside her Youtube enactment of a shamanistic rite for the dead. AAA artists capitalised on popular digital formats to explore their diasporic capacities for cross-border connections for co-creation, and affirmed their broader aims of nurturing transnational community and solidarity.

These AAA Live Art examples and the artists<sup>108</sup> suggest that LADA still has work to do in order to embrace a broader range of practices from diaspora communities, in keeping with Live Art as a flexible artistic mode that has the capacity to champion the representation of marginalised and vulnerable communities, especially as the commissioning of diverse Live Art practices is still at present dependent on curators, organisations and institutions being willing to source and dedicate resources towards new and unfamiliar artistic modes. Artists that embrace technological innovation may broaden their opportunities for making Live Art sustainably in a post-pandemic digitally connected world. These possibilities open up pathways of presentation – thus also triggering a necessary expansive rethinking of the practice of Live Art that was once thus idealised, ‘Live art cannot be placed within any singular history, viewed through a disciplinary lens, or held in any cultural boundary or place.’<sup>109</sup>

108 I made a short survey of a number of AAA Associates interested in working within Live Art for this essay. The general response was that LADA occupies a significant role in the development of Live Art practices and discourses, and they look to LADA for direction on the work they wish to do, but all have responded that they find it difficult to access significant support from LADA for their practice.

109 Keidan, Lois, and Brine, Daniel, ‘Live Art in London’, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 81, 27:3, 2005, pp.74-82.

## NOW IT IS NOW

An\*dre Neely & Phoebe Patey-Ferguson

*Live Art/Lives Art/Evil Art/Vile Art/Love Art are terms taken from a conversation between Anne Bean and Alistair MacLennan in the book AGENCY: A Partial History of Live Art (2019).*

*Here and now is never possible without there and then.*

### LIVE ART

Last year, a short pair of weeks before isolation became a necessity, exactly in that period of pre-lockdowns that we now wished had cherished more profoundly, like we do with most endings we are unaware of as such, we were together for a birthday. By ‘we’, we mean us, An\*dre and Phoebe, writing; but also ‘we’ as in everyone who in one way or another, through the passing of time and the healing of scars, has bound themselves integrally to the way we belong in our bodies and without whom we’d be unable to produce any semblance of meaning. The birthday was Phoebe’s, if we really have to give it to anyone.

We danced all night, like we often used to, elated in the freedom of encountering each other again. There was dancing and singing-along, bodies grinding on each other, performing, there was making-out, skin-on-skin, sharing drinks and cigarettes and straws; a scene our COVID-aware selves would squirm at for the proximity to contagion. Droplets were shared between us, as a technology of belonging we revelled in before they were a lethal danger we are made to avoid. The afternoon after, after lavishly soaking our hangovers in a breakfast fry-up, we made our way to Artsadmin for Steakhouse’s Slow Sunday, in a hazy ritual we performed so many times before, intra and inter-city pilgrimages we repeated yearly: to Buzzcut, to Fierce, to SPILL, to Latitude, to Thorny, to IBT. Many (most) of the events we fell in love *with/at*, no longer exist, or no longer exist in the same format, some due to the pandemic, mostly not. The crisis is not new.

Now, the UK finds itself a floating, flag-waving island, cut off in a post-Brexit, pre-post pandemic creeping fascist quagmire. Our self-imposed isolation, firstly from the rest of fortress Europe due to a rightwing nationalist-populist campaign and secondly, isolated out of fear, care and legislation designed to protect us from a dangerous droplet transmission of COVID-19.

In Live Art spaces we made friends, lovers, lost control, and excavated layers of abuse and exploitation that had long pre-existed us and sucked us in. In Live Art spaces our rules were different, our ambitions were for pleasure and our working-language was care. We write in the past because then it was then, a then whose temporal distance to now we won’t even try to quantify.



## LIVES ART

A few months ago, when filling in another Arts Council England form (EMERGENCY jumping off the title, as if our panic wasn't already enough), I stopped as I wrote a list of all the work I'd had cancelled, and enumerated the previous work I'd been a part of that allowed me into a category of deserving EMERGENCY help. We want to imagine security and support beyond Combined Arts Officers at ACE, to think that our time together in rooms pulling each other into extremity can bring us more than a passport to through the borders of government support. We want to prioritise those who are shut out as the price we pay to be allowed in.

How could we ever afford good ideas and how are we to afford them especially now? The struggle for a liveable life has shapeshifted downwards as Live Art capsuled in an upwards plunge to recognition and visibility. In missing liveness, the overwhelming grief of the now has restructured what feels relevant, what relevancy in itself means. We're grieving and we're lost, or in the way towards finding. In our missing, we've been slowly shedding away the unnecessary layers of the programming/presenting apparatus; live bodies in live spaces watching live performance and thinking about living is for us what makes Live Art.

How is an art live when increasing populations are barely living? How should an art of liveness be moved by mass levels of government-sponsored avoidable deaths? In missing, longing and grieving, we've seen communities mobilising for mutual aid, and discovering ways of helping each other without being live, or being live without being together. Discourse regarding consent, physical touch and personal space supersedes our greetings in the rare moments we interact in shared physical rooms and I can't stop thinking that Live Art nights, and the framed encounters we participated in then, were poetic bootcamps for the boundaries we're required to be versed in setting now. Whilst missing liveness and lives, and sinking in a grief that mutates faster than it allows itself to be incorporated, we're forcibly directed into virtualisation as the battle is waged on our material condition.

We're hanging by our feet, the knot around our ankles loosening its grip; we're face-down but there's all these other people with us, facing a fall that would land us directly on a skull-crush, one that still doesn't feel as deadly as the fabricated credit crunch summoned to justify last decade's financial crash. Cr-cr-cr as in the lethal stretching of the rope threatening to drop us head-first on the ground.

## EVIL ART

Is it possible to be parasitic? Bending our bodies and our art to fit the architecture of the institution. Watching as compromise is heaped on compromise. Witnessing up close the exhausting extraction of labour. Our institutions are built on structures of sameness, of taste decided by those who hold power, the ones with the privilege to reach the top. This sameness may attempt to include difference, but it can only do so as tokenistic gestures or as assimilationist force. These institutions are formed in imperialist history, yes, but also the history of

art policy post-1980s, one that forces in the direction of a long-term existence, of 'good' business, of sustaining hierarchies; one that holds preciousy onto longevity, growth, and a strive to continually increase resources and extraction at the expense of the Other.

The institution isn't built for the insulted and the injured. Our precarious lives, caught up in the chewing and spitting up of racism, transphobia and ableism embedded at every level, silenced under the cloak of representation; our bodies an aesthetic prop, a disposable visual gimmick, the hurt, trauma and violence done to it minted into new markets but disregarded by a neoliberal state concerned solely with the protection of property. In 2020 we saw the rumblings and fragility that may lead to collapse. If there was doubt, institutions no longer serve the people: their empty buildings, the logos and reputations becoming more important than the workers and the people; conceptualising a political angle more important than doing the work of politics.

Our social evolution into the trap of visibility and representation has us stuck on an interminable cycle of being given a voice by swearing our silence; asked for discretion regarding the wrongdoings of the institution in exchange for a platform. We, marginalised people practicing marginalised practices (the crip, the dispossessed, those subjected to racism and xenophobia, the queers, the Live Artists), fear of speaking out for the damage to our reputations, to those of our comrades, fear we will have nowhere else to go, no home or support to find each other in. Black artists' work about race is staged, their promotional images dominating the public-facing side of the institution, as a full white team lines up the desks in the office and in the mysterious collective entity we know unanimously as The Board; trans and gender non-conforming artists are championed as behind the scenes the only trans person files a complaint, or resigns over the toxic environment in the administrative team; our labour presented to a full audience in tears and rage over our explorations of abuse, as the abusers we've called for justice from roam the same corridors, present in the same programmes, get more money than we do.

## VILE ART

Getting inside the institutions, we're interested only in a vile art that purposefully hides its real intentions, populates the invisible folds of its shape with parasites and hackers, its presentation a smokescreen; an art whose visible aesthetics are also a distraction technique, art that grips with its formal experiments to allow redistribution and extraction under the veil of audience gatherings and reframed encounters. An art who remains living hides heists into the stolen artifacts stash in its curation of programmes at the British Museum; an art who remains living secures stable contracts and fair pay for all their partners' in-and-outsourced service and cleaning staff when presenting with private foundations and rich collections; an art that remains living refuses the temptation of performative politics and of eternal replication, understanding when defending itself has taken over defending its original principles; an art that remains living isn't afraid of irrelevancy, isn't afraid to die.

THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE, claims the trend-slogan on every art institution. If an art institution admits to being ineffective to the point it ceases to formulate alternatives, then please bow down, close and fund others to replace you. In 2016 I challenged the then-Chair of the Arts Council England on an assertion over the success of trickle-down economics in the arts; he smugly patted me on the shoulder and said 'it's nice to see that young people are still trying to be radical'. I still regret fighting the urge to punch him in the face. It is not impossible, barely even radical, to believe in art's purpose beyond keeping pockets full; in its capacity to pluralise and re-envision economies altogether.

We're cowed by non-disclosure agreements, told to stand out but keep in line, perform radicality enough to be invited to the British Council Showcase party as 'lively' decor, but not so radical we disrupt the soft power of cultural diplomacy. If you're lucky, you will be gifted enough drink tokens to down two bottles of rosé and vomit into the gutters of Edinburgh.

But when you are on your hands and knees, vomit trickling down your arms and into the gutter, remember who picks you up and gets you home, washes you off and puts you to bed. When you are screwed over by an institution and issued an exploitative contract, think who always comes to the rescue. When the party's over and the networking lights are out, we share taxis, fears and information about abusers, forward voice-notes and a google doc with names because not even a pandemic stops this.

The majority of artists, producers and academics in Live Art are working together in the cracks to care for each other. We hustle, we build temporary spaces, we travel, text, zoom or call, we stick bits together, we find and bend time to make the art we believe in, to facilitate the art we believe in, to witness it and those who labour to make it happen. We have shared a million moments, a million glimpses of possibility, of potentiality, of difference and change; we have spent days, months, years, decades together building language, vocabulary, experience; attempting a place for ourselves outside of this bullshit. THERE ARE MANY FUCKING ALTERNATIVES.

#### LOVE ART

We are bound together by seeking that rush of ephemerality: the glimpse of a body as it falls into the water, the tension in a string held in the mouth, the impact of a fist on clay, the hand that holds yours and the sound that rattles your heart, the falling of magnesium against brick, the arousal of tentacle-based fan fiction, the changing, i'm changing, i'm changing, i'm changing, the lube massaged into the suspended body, the leg pressed against yours, the whizzbang of firecrackers and catherine wheels, the glance across the room, the body contorting in alternate space-time, the glimmer of sweat and roar of breath that brings water dribbling out your eye, the lyrics on a screen making your voice gag in your throat when you're asked to sing, the facing into a wall.

There is no poverty of imagination in the heart of Live Artists, but a lack of action in the structures that exist to hold us. A practice prefixed with 'live', should've

always refrained from recycling organisational structures which have long been proved dead. Old financial models and strategic legal framings must be made anew: the institution as charity breeds the artist as charity-case, maintaining the binary of this always-repeating power imbalance, power-preservation through the replication of divisions of class; marginalised artists as a saddening calamity in need of help, misfortunate beggars desperate for the charitable hands of the gatekeepers of aesthetic and political sameness, a lower-budget fucked-up perpetual role-play of the philanthropic-patron fantasy.

This work, our work, all these millions of moments, need to be held, cradled and supported by systems that refuse to sloganise radicalism and instead enact it. Systems that hold themselves together with the flexibility and integrity that ephemerality deserves, forming and reforming in service of its desire of Live Art and the needs of Live Artists. The structures of care for ourselves and the work must be horizontally and collectively discussed, the stakes for all parts made transparent, its foundations ethical and altruistic. We are collaborators and co-operators, we build, re-build and collapse together. What doesn't work should be scrapped, abandoned, their pieces broken up and redistributed for others to try, and eventually fail, and fail better.

Where we are at, and what is coming, are periods of deep, deep inequality, an intensification of the stale dynamic of winners and losers, the salaried and the precarious. We insist in the limited temporal moment because history is a fictional weapon we hold little power in; Live Art, with its weirdness, unpredictability, apparent obscurity and inherent queerness, can, in our attempts at solidarity and coalition building, be framed – and strike us – as so utterly frivolous and naive. As increasing numbers of people struggle to survive, as rents continue to increase, jobs harder to hold down, its wages unfailingly deflating, who has time to watch the artist perform her slow actions? The lie we begin to believe, the lie that the lobbyists of our 'growing market' and the out-of-touch campaigns of institutions inadvertently champion, is that art is luxury, that to feel differently, to desire differently, to commune differently is something we do not deserve.

Live Art, as it exists now, for us, here, is to love, to feel, to share, to believe, to try, to hope, the friction of our bodies being and becoming. We may be held by a thread, but momentarily, we're belonging.



## Commissioned Artists and Writers Biographies

### Aaron Williamson

Over the last twenty years, Aaron Williamson has created over 300 performances, videos, installations and publications in Britain, Europe, Japan, China, Australia, Scandinavia, USA, South America, Canada and many other countries around the world.

He has a PhD in Critical Theory from the University of Sussex (1997), and has published widely, including a monograph for the Live Art Development Agency 'Performance / Video / Collaboration' (2007). Awards as an artist include the Helen Chadwick Fellowship at the British School at Rome (2000–01); three year Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts at BIAD, University of Central England (2004–07); and the Stephen Cripps Studio Bursary, Acme Studios (2013–14).

Williamson's work is informed by his experience of becoming deaf and by a politicised and progressive sensibility towards disability. At a University of California San Diego lecture in 1998, he coined the term 'Deaf Gain' as a counter-emphasis to 'hearing loss'.

A retrospective of Williamson's performance documentation and short films, his work with the Disabled Avant Garde and 15mm films, were exhibited at the Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester, May–June 2019, alongside a large-scale commissioned installation work 'Inspiration Archives'.

He is currently a Research fellow in Fine Art at Oxford Brookes University.  
www.aaronwilliamson.org

### Alexandrina Hemsley

Alexandrina Hemsley's creative practice lands in the fluid spaces of dance, choreography, writing, facilitating and advocacy. Their interests are both enduring and in expansive states of flux – or just in connection/relation to the processes within life and within living. They turn towards the sensorial, the bodily, the multiple subjective positions of self – and self in intimate relation to self and other selves – as ways to find breath and voice amidst the unjust and inequitable. Alexandrina has recently founded her own organisation Yewande 103. Yewande 103 formalises the past 10+ years of Creative Director Alexandrina Hemsley's work in the contemporary dance field as a choreographer, performer, writer, mentor and educator.  
www.alexandrinahemsley.com  
Twitter @AlexandrinaHemsley

### An\*dre Neely

An\*dre Neely is an artist working at the intersections of performance, writing and digital practice.

### Anne Bean

For over fifty years, Anne Bean has presented work in numerous galleries and venues worldwide. Galleries in London that have shown her work include Tate, Hayward, Whitechapel, Serpentine, ICA and Royal Academy. She received several large-scale awards such as a British Council Creative Collaborations fund, activating international work with women from countries of conflict. She was artist in residence at many institutions including Franklin Furnace, New York and Whitechapel Gallery, London. Matt's Gallery, London presented several solo shows of hers. In a major monograph on her work, *Self Etc.*, 2018, published by Intellect and LADA, Dominic Johnson wrote that Anne's art 'makes strange our sense of time, memory, language, the body, and identity ... along a vital

continuum between art and life.' Throughout 2020 she programmed monthly works on the Thames foreshore, titled *Come Hell or High Water*, involving over 100 artists. Anne is currently working with several Zambian artists.

For her commissioned response to the Live Art sector research project, Anne Bean worked in collaboration with the following artists: Agness Buya Yombwe, Gladys Kalichini, Marita Banda and Serah Chibombwe.

### Agness Buya Yombwe

Agness Buya Yombwe is an award-winning mixed media artist, arts educator, author and mentor. She is widely recognized in Zambia for her many leadership roles and her advocacy and training efforts on behalf of an entire generation of women artists. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout Zambia, and in solo and group exhibitions in Europe, Asia and the United States. Following her arts education in Zambia, Agness attended Wimbledon College of Arts, London. Agness has received numerous prestigious awards and honors, and has participated in invitational residencies at the Edvard Munch Studio in Oslo, Norway, and the McColl Centre for Visual Arts, North Carolina, USA. In December 2020, she was chosen to be an artist in residence at the World Bank, Washington, D.C., and was showcased by the World Bank Art Program in December 2020 in an online exhibition. She currently has two publications: *Kudumbisiana (Dialogue)*, 2015; and *Ni Mzilo (It is Taboo)*, 2019.

### Gladys Kalichini

Gladys Kalichini is a contemporary visual artist and researcher from Lusaka, Zambia. Her work centres around notions of erasure, memory, and

representations and visibilities of women in colonial resistance histories. She is currently a PhD candidate at Rhodes University in South Africa and a member of the Arts of Africa & Global Souths research programme, supported by the Andrew W Mellon foundation and the National Research Fund. She has participated in Àsikò International Art Programme with the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA Lagos) in Maputo, Mozambique in 2015; the Fountainhead Residency in Miami, USA in 2017; and the second iteration of the 'Women On Aeroplanes' project in Lagos, Nigeria in 2018 themed 'Search Research: Looking for Collete Omogbai', and Künstlerhaus Bethanien international studio programme in Berlin, Germany in 2019/2020, supported by the KFW – Stiftung.

### Marita Banda

Marita Banda is the author of *Telling It Like It Is*, a collection of poetry in Tumbuka, French and English, and *Traditional Zambian Etiquette for Modern Living, Youth Edition*. Her etiquette book has been adopted as an official textbook for the etiquette course at the Zambia Institute for Diplomatic and International Studies (ZIDIS.) She is working on two book projects for 2021 release; *Vegan, Vegetarian and Pescatarian Cookbook* and the *General Edition of Traditional Zambian Etiquette for Modern Living*. She has recently been collaborating with artists from other disciplines including music, film, performance and visual arts. Marita is co-founder of the Network for Society Transformation, which established Sotrane Publishers. She is chairperson of the Zambia Reprographic Rights Society and founding chairperson of the Zambian subgroup of the Writers Space Africa. She is a member of PEN Zambia, a chapter of PEN International, where for two years, she coordinated

a Civil Society Project on Mother Languages among secondary schools in Lusaka Province. A language teacher by day and writer and editor by night, she spends her other time experimenting with vegetarian recipes, organic gardening, reading, touring Zambia, or exploring with fabric art.

### Serah Chibombwe

Serah Chibombwe AKA Serah Chule, is a Zambian female artist born in 1989. She describes herself as an inspirational, conformational, motivational and transformational artist. Though trained as a chef, she started off as a painter and transitioned to performance, installation and film. Her work, drawn from childhood experiences, mainly addresses the struggle that human beings in modern society go through in their quest to belong and find a place they can call home. She expresses this through an alter ego 'Maambo Chaambwe'. She is currently the Production Set designer and Art Director at Yoweli Chungu Filimu and Art Residency (YCF), a place she calls 'the safe hub' because of the spirit that lives there.

### Annie Jael Kwan

Annie Jael Kwan is an independent curator and researcher whose exhibition-making, programming, publication and teaching practice is located at the intersection of contemporary art, art history and cultural activism, with interest in archives, histories, feminist, queer and alternative knowledges, collective practices, and solidarity. As co-director of Something Human, she has presented Live Art projects across the UK and Europe, and launched the pioneering Southeast Asia Performance Collection (SAPC) at the Live Art Development Agency in 2017. She leads Asia-Art-Activism (AAA), a research network that explores the proximities

of art and activism. She was the co-editor of *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia's* guest issue: Archives. She is a recipient of a Diverse Actions Leadership Award 2019, and currently teaches at Central St Martins, University of the Arts, London, and at KASK, School of Art, in Gent, Belgium.

[www.anniejaelkwan.com](http://www.anniejaelkwan.com)

### Jamal Gerald

Jamal Gerald is an artist based in Leeds, UK. His work is conversational, unapologetic and provocative with a social message. He makes work that he wants to see, intending to take up space as a Black queer person.

In 2018, he was awarded Arts Council England's Artists' International Development Fund to do research in Trinidad and Tobago. Jamal's work has been shown at Kampnagel (Hamburg), SPILL Festival of Performance, Battersea Arts Centre and the Barbican. Jamal is a Recipient of a Jerwood Arts' Live Work Fund Award in 2021.

### Phoebe Patey-Ferguson

Phoebe Patey-Ferguson is an academic with a counter-hegemonic practice of teaching, researching, making and curating Live Art.

### Tim Etchells

Tim Etchells' practice shifts between performance, visual art and fiction. Leading the renowned Sheffield-based performance group Forced Entertainment since its foundation in 1984, his work has been exhibited and presented in significant institutions all over the world. His short fiction collection *Endland* was published by And Other Stories in 2019.

[www.timetchells.com](http://www.timetchells.com)

[www.forcedentertainment.com](http://www.forcedentertainment.com)



# 06

## Reading and Appendices

Bibliography  
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# Appendices

## Appendix I: List of members of the advisory group supporting this research

Aaron Wright, Artistic Director, Fierce, Birmingham  
Alessandra Cianetti, founder and curator, performingborders, London  
Annie Jael Kwan, independent curator, researcher and educator, Asia Art Activism, Asia Forum, Central St Martins, University of the Arts London  
Brian Lobel, Performer, and Professor of Theatre & Performance at Rose Bruford College, London  
Daniel Brine, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Norfolk & Norwich Festival  
Professor Dee Heddon, James Arnott Chair in Drama, University of Glasgow  
Giulia Casalini, Independent curator, co-director at Arts Feminism Queer (CUNTemporary) and PhD candidate at Roehampton University, London  
Helen Cole, Artistic Director/CEO, In Between Time, Bristol/South West  
Jo Verrent, Senior producer, Unlimited, Bradford  
Louise O'Kelly, Founding Director & Curator, Block Universe, London  
Mark Waugh, Curator/Writer, Director of Business Development, DACS, London  
Mary Paterson, London  
Dr. R Justin Hunt, Lecturer and Creative Producer, Arts Council England, Syracuse University, London  
Sara Sassanelli, Curator, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London  
Selina Thompson, Artist, Writer, Artistic Director, STLtd, Birmingham  
Shaheen Merali, Independent curator/writer, London  
Sophia Yadong Hao, Director & Principal Curator, Cooper Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee, Scotland  
Dr. Steve Greer, Senior Lecturer in Theatre Practices, University of Glasgow, Glasgow  
the vacuum cleaner, Artist and mental health activism, Margate  
Tracy Gentles, Creative Director/CEO, Something To Aim For / The Sick of the Fringe, London/Glasgow

## Appendix II: List of Live Art UK members

Arnolfini  
Artsadmin  
Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts  
Battersea Arts Centre  
the Bluecoat  
BUZZCUT  
Cambridge Junction  
Centre for Live Art Yorkshire  
Chapter  
Colchester Arts Centre  
Compass Live Art  
Contact  
Fierce Festival  
Forest Fringe  
hÅb  
Home Live Art  
In Between Time  
Lancaster Arts  
LIFT - London International Festival of Theatre  
Live Art Development Agency  
National Theatre of Scotland  
Norwich Arts Centre  
SICK! Festival  
Steakhouse Live  
Take Me Somewhere  
Tempting Failure  
Marlborough Productions  
Transform  
Wunderbar  
]performance s p a c e[

## Appendix III: List of individuals consulted

We are grateful to all the individuals who have participated in this research, including those listed below.

Dr Áine Phillips, artist and lecturer, head of sculpture Burren College of Art County Clare, Ireland  
Alexandrina Hemsley, dance artist, writer and facilitator, Creative Director of Yewande 103 Limited, London  
Alister Lownie, creative practitioner; Director, Two Destination Language  
Anna Hodgart, Engine Room Producer, National Theatre of Scotland, Glasgow  
Anne Bean, artist, London  
Annie Lloyd, Co-Director, Compass Live Art, Leeds  
Bean, anarcho-feminist mother-fucker artist

Bojana Janković, artist and PhD Researcher (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), Belfast/London  
Cassie Leon, Arts and Cabaret producer, The Cocoa Butter Club//  
Raze Collective, London  
Dr Cath Lambert, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Warwick, West Midlands  
Cheryl Pierce, Head of Performing Arts & Learning, Creative Folkestone, Folkestone  
CJ Mitchell, freelance producer, Faversham (Kent); (formerly Co-Director, Live Art Development Agency, London)  
Clare Qualmann, Artist, Researcher, and Lecturer at the University of East London, London  
Dr Daniel Oliver, Live Artist and Lecturer, London  
David Cahill Roots, Arts Partnership Manager, Wellcome Collection, London  
Demi Nandhra, Artist, Birmingham  
Dr Diana Damian Martin, Senior Lecturer, Performance Arts and Course Leader, BA Hons Contemporary Performance – Performance Arts, Royal Central School of Speech of Drama, London  
Dr Eleanor Roberts, Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts at University of Roehampton, London  
Dr Elena Marchevska, Associate Professor in Performance Studies, London South Bank University, London  
Fox Irving, Artist / Producer, Hastings  
Prof Gavin Butt, Northumbria University, Newcastle  
Dr Gillie Kleiman, artist and academic, Newcastle upon Tyne  
Heike Roms, Professor in Theatre and Performance, University of Exeter, Exeter; and project director of “What’s Welsh for Performance?”, Cardiff  
Helen Davies, Co-CEO, In Between Time, Bristol  
Jade Foster, Curator and Creative Producer, Black Curators Collective, New Art Exchange, and Primary, Nottingham  
Jade Montserrat, Artist, North Yorkshire  
James Stenhouse, artist/co-artistic director, Action Hero, Bristol  
James Tyson, Theatre & Dance Programme Manager, British Council, London  
Jane Trowell, Arts educator and curator, Platform, London  
Jo Bannon, Artist, Bristol  
Jon Opie, Deputy Director, Jerwood Arts, London  
Joshua Sofaer, Artist, London  
Karl Taylor, Producer for BUZZCUT & Take Me Somewhere, Glasgow  
Katy Baird, Artist, Director of Home Live Art and Producer at Steakhouse Live, Hastings  
Kelly Green, Artist, academic and visiting lecturer, London  
Kira O’Reilly, artist, Helsinki, Finland  
Laura Sweeney, Independent Producer and Co-Director of The Uncultured, Essex  
Lena Šimić, artist, politician, researcher, Liverpool  
Liz Clarke, Artist, Bristol  
Liz Tomlin, Professor of Theatre & Performance, University of Glasgow  
Lydia Cottrell, independent artist, producer and digital marketer, Director of SLAP, York  
Professor Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Associate Dean, Research, Business & Innovation, Kingston School of Art, London



Matt Fenton, Artistic Director & Chief Executive, Contact, Manchester Migrants in Culture

Mike Pony, Artistic Director, Submerge, Manchester

Dr Owen G Parry, Artist, researcher and Associate Lecturer in Fine Art, Central Saint Martins, UAL, London

Patricia Lavery, Visual Arts Development Officer, Arts Council Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland

Patrick Fox, Heart of Glass - St Helens, Merseyside

Dr Paul Geary, lecturer, UK

(Dr) Paul Hurley, Artist/Academic, Bristol

Peter Reed, Co-Director, Compass Live Art, Leeds, UK

Pippa Frith, Executive Producer, Fierce Festival / Independent Producer, Birmingham

Rachel Cunningham Clark, Producer, Forma

Dr Rachel Gomme, independent artist, performer, researcher and teacher

Rachel Rogers, Producer & Consultant, DaDaFest & Freelance, Liverpool

Rebecca Weeks & Ian Whitford AKA (Weeks & Whitford), Performance Artists & Curators, Performance Platform, London

Rhiannon Armstrong, independent self-producing artist, London

Richard James Hall, Performance Artist, Tyne and Wear

Roberta Mock, Professor of Performance Studies, University of Plymouth, and Chair of the Theatre & Performance Research Association (TaPRA), Devon

Rosana Cade, Artist, Glasgow

Rosie Cooper, Head of Exhibitions, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-sea, East Sussex

Sam Trotman, Director, Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Aberdeenshire

Sandra Corrigan Breathnach, Artist and Co-Chairperson BBeyond, North West of Ireland

Sebastian H-W, Live Artist, West Midlands

Shabnam Shabazi, independent maker and enabler, London

Simon Casson, Producer, Duckie, London

Steven Brett, Programme Manager Theatre and Dance, The Americas, the Caribbean and EU Europe, Cultural Engagement, British Council

Sylvia Rimat, Performance Maker and Producer, Bristol

Tamsin Drury, Director, hÅb & Word of Warning, Manchester

Tania Camara, Interdisciplinary Artist, Manchester

Dr Tara Fatehi Irani, artist, performer and educator

Tarik Elmoutawakil, Independent Artist & Creative Director, Marlborough Productions, Brighton

Tim Etchells, artist, Forced Entertainment, Sheffield/London

Tim Other, Director, The Raze Collective, London

Vanessa Boyd, Interdisciplinary Performance Officer, Creative Scotland, Glasgow

Vee Smith, independent performance artist, Glasgow

Vijay Patel, Performance Artist/Writer/Neurodivergent Access Consultant (Freelance), London

Whiskey Chow, artist, artist-curator and Visiting Lecturer/Tutor, Royal College of Art, London

Appendix IV: Data from 2019 survey of individuals.

Q1. I indetify as an (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses	
artist	73.26%	189
producer	36.82%	95
curator/programmer/commissioner	34.11%	88
administrator	15.50%	40
educator	28.68%	74
researcher	31.78%	82
support/access worker	3.88%	10
audience member	55.04%	142
Other (please specify)	6.59%	17
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q2. I identify with the following artforms and disciplines (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Dance	39.92%	103
Visual Art	59.69%	154
Theatre	64.73%	167
Music	25.19%	65
Performance	93.80%	242
Digital Media	31.01%	80
Literature / Text	36.82%	95
Combined arts	54.26%	140
Other (please specify)	8.91%	23
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q3. I am professionally involved with/in Live Art:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Dance	39.92%	103
Visual Art	59.69%	154
Theatre	64.73%	167
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q4. Live Art as a term and/or practice informs me as a creative person:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	5.81%	15
Disagree	3.88%	10
Neutral	20.93%	54
Agree	37.98%	98
Strongly Agree	31.40%	81
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q5. I have worked with/in Live Art for:

Answer Choices	Responses	
0 – 2 years	10.08%	26
2 – 5 years	15.50%	40
5 – 8 years	13.18%	34
8 – 10 years	17.83%	46
10-20 years	28.68%	74
More than 20 years	14.73%	38
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q6. I am based in:

Answer Choices	Responses	
East Midlands	1.16%	3
East of England	3.49%	9
London (including Greater London)	34.50%	89
North East	3.49%	9
North West	11.63%	30
South East	8.14%	21
South West	8.14%	21
West Midlands	3.49%	9
Yorkshire	5.43%	14
Wales	0.78%	2
Scotland	11.24%	29
Northern Ireland	0.00%	0
EU	5.43%	14
North America	0.39%	1
Other (please specify)	2.71%	7
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q7. In the last 5 years, on average, I have made over 50% of my annual income through working with Live Art:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	5.81%	15
Yes	31.78%	82
No	64.73%	167
Prefer not to say	3.49%	9
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q8. Thinking about your answer to the previous question, indicate how you have made this income:

Answer Choices	Responses	
As an artist	23.64%	61
As an employee of an organisation (including higher education)	25.58%	66
As an independent/freelance arts professional	13.95%	36
A combination of the some or all of the above	28.68%	74
Other (please specify)	8.14%	21
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q9. Live Art has enabled me to test my practice in a number of different areas:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly disagree	3.49%	9
Disagree	1.94%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	21.32%	55
Agree	46.12%	119
Strongly agree	27.13%	70
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0



Q.10 Thinking about your answer to the previous question, please indicate which areas (tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Responses	
activism and politics	62.02%	160
civic participation	42.64%	110
health and wellbeing	41.47%	107
aesthetic experimentation	74.81%	193
intellectual stimulation	79.46%	205
professional development	65.89%	170
reflection and inspiration	67.05%	173
Other (please specify)		14
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q11. What has Live Art enabled in your practice, and how has your practice fed into Live Art?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Free text answers not included due to privacy concerns

Q12. I have and/or am taking a higher education qualification that directly informs my Live Art practice:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	54.65%	141
No	39.15%	101
Prefer not to say	1.16%	3
Other (please specify)	5.04%	13
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q13. I attend Live Art events as an audience member:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Weekly	15.50%	40
Monthly	32.56%	84
Every 2 months	27.91%	72
Every 6 months	15.12%	39
Every year	5.43%	14
Less than once a year	2.71%	7
Never	0.78%	2
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q14. I go to Live Art events (tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Responses	
To experience something different	67.44%	174
To be provoked and challenged	74.42%	192
To experience and think about different perspectives	76.36%	197
For reflection	53.88%	139
To spend time with friends/family	42.64%	110
Live Art is an important part of who I am	43.02%	111
To escape from everyday life	14.73%	38
To be intellectually stimulated	78.29%	202
For academic reasons	31.40%	81
To be entertained	47.29%	122
For professional reasons	69.77%	180
To be inspired	65.89%	170
To do something new/out of the ordinary	30.62%	79
To educate/ stimulate my children	10.08%	26
To learn something	51.55%	133
Other (please specify)	2.33%	6
	Answered	258
	Skipped	0

Q15. It is important for my work to be recognised by UK Live Art organisations and networks such as Live Art UK and its member organisations:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	4.44%	10
Disagree	8.89%	20
Neutral	27.56%	62
Agree	37.78%	85
Strongly Agree	21.33%	48
Answered		225
Skipped		33

Q16. I utilise Live Art networking resources such as Artsadmin Artists' Advisory Service; Artsadmin e-digest; Live Art Development Agency Study Room; Live Art Development Agency Study Room Guides; Live Art UK:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	12.00%	27
Rarely	14.67%	33
Sometimes	40.44%	91
Often	22.22%	50
Very often	10.67%	24
Answered		225
Skipped		33

Q17. I have participated in and/or organised professional development programmes for Live Art practitioners (please tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Participated		Organised		Total
a-n Bursaries (Artists Information Company)	82.61%	19	30.43%	7	23
Artsadmin Artist Bursary	85.19%	23	14.81%	4	27
Cambridge Junction Troop / Watch Out Programmes	72.73%	8	27.27%	3	11
Compass Artist Development Bursaries	57.14%	4	42.86%	3	7
DaDaFest Mentoring Programme	100.00%	1	0.00%	0	1
Diverse Actions	59.38%	19	50.00%	16	32
Divergency	83.33%	5	33.33%	2	6
hÅb Divergency	40.00%	2	60.00%	3	5
FWD Artist Development Programme (Fierce)	100.00%	3	0.00%	0	3
hÅb Works Ahead	92.31%	12	15.38%	2	13
In Between Time Creative Exchange Lab	66.67%	4	33.33%	2	6
Jerwood Bursaries	91.30%	21	17.39%	4	23
Live Art Development Agency's DIY programme	80.00%	72	38.89%	35	90
Live Art Development Agency's One to One Bursary	80.00%	4	20.00%	1	5
National Theatre Scotland Engine Room	100.00%	8	0.00%	0	8
New Queens on the Block (Marlborough)	66.67%	6	44.44%	4	9
Nuffield Bursary (Lancaster Arts)	100.00%	6	16.67%	1	6
Scottish Sculpture Workshop residency programme	75.00%	3	25.00%	1	4
Spill National Platform	91.89%	34	16.22%	6	37
Tempting Failure Mentoring Programme	78.95%	15	42.11%	8	19
None of the above	93.75%	75	66.25%	53	80
Other (please specify)					36
				Answered	225
				Skipped	33



Q18. I have attended, presented and/or supported work presented at UK Live Art Festivals/platforms (please tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Participated		Organised		Total
Abandon Normal Devices	96.30%	26	22.22%	6	27
Block Universe	80.95%	17	19.05%	4	21
British Showcase at Edinburgh Festival	96.20%	76	39.24%	31	79
Buzzcut	83.72%	72	56.98%	49	86
Caravan at Brighton Festival	85.19%	23	51.85%	14	27
Compass Live Art	81.40%	35	41.86%	18	43
Duckie	86.60%	84	40.21%	39	97
Experimentica	86.67%	26	46.67%	14	30
Fierce Festival	86.81%	79	40.66%	37	91
hÅb Emergency	63.64%	21	78.79%	26	33
hÅb Hazard	72.92%	35	62.50%	30	48
Homotopia	60.87%	14	56.52%	13	23
In Between Time	89.52%	94	38.10%	40	105
Knotty	66.67%	8	66.67%	8	12
LIFT festival	96.94%	95	20.41%	20	98
Mayfest	77.55%	38	55.10%	27	49
Norwich and Norfolk Festival	75.86%	22	51.72%	15	29
Queer Contact Festival	83.33%	25	56.67%	17	30
Sick! Festival	91.07%	51	42.86%	24	56
Spill Festival	85.09%	97	42.98%	49	114
Steakhouse Live	90.00%	63	32.86%	23	70
Supernormal festival	85.71%	12	64.29%	9	14
Take Me Somewhere	86.67%	39	44.44%	20	45
Tempting Failure	86.27%	44	50.98%	26	51
Transform Festival	85.71%	18	47.62%	10	21
The Sick of the Fringe	94.00%	47	28.00%	14	50
Wunderbar	100.00%	25	32.00%	8	25
None of the above	92.00%	23	68.00%	17	25
Other (please specify)					29
Answered				225	
Skipped				33	

Q19. I have attended, presented and/or supported work presented at International Live Art Festivals (please tick all the apply):

Answer Choices	Participated		Organised		Total
ANTI festival, Finland	54.84%	17	74.19%	23	31
Belluard Bollwerk International, Switzerland	66.67%	8	41.67%	5	12
City of Women, Slovenia	63.33%	19	53.33%	16	30
Festival of Live Art, Australia	62.50%	5	87.50%	7	8
Kunsten Festival, Belgium	80.95%	17	42.86%	9	21
Live Collision Festival, Ireland	57.14%	12	57.14%	12	21
Perform Istanbul, Turkey	33.33%	1	66.67%	2	3
Performa, USA	66.67%	10	46.67%	7	15
PUSH festival, Canada	52.38%	11	61.90%	13	21
Steirischer Herbst Festival, Austria	70.00%	7	70.00%	7	10
Time Based Art Festival, Portland, USA	66.67%	4	33.33%	2	6
Under the Radar, USA	80.00%	20	20.00%	5	25
Venice International Performance Week, Italy	57.14%	12	57.14%	12	21
None of the above	95.93%	118	67.48%	83	123
Answered				225	
Skipped				33	

Q20. Artist-led initiatives are important to my Live Art practice:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	4.00%	9
Disagree	1.78%	4
Neutral	19.11%	43
Agree	36.44%	82
Strongly Agree	38.67%	87
Answered		225
Skipped		33

Q21. I collaborate with artists who work with Live Art from across the world:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	8.44%	19
Rarely	20.89%	47
Sometimes	44.89%	101
Often	20.00%	45
Very often	5.78%	13
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>33</b>

Q22. My work with Live Art has led me to work with organisations outside of the arts sector:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	67.11%	151
No	28.89%	65
Prefer not to say	4.00%	9
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>33</b>

Q23. My work with Live Art has led me to work with organisations outside of the arts sector such as (tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Responses	
Major Trusts or Charitable Foundations	29.33%	66
Corporations	8.89%	20
SMEs	7.11%	16
Governments and other statutory bodies	17.78%	40
Universities	70.22%	158
Community Organisations	48.89%	110
Schools	29.78%	67
Grassroots political and activist movements	38.22%	86
Local authority and regeneration	25.78%	58
Hospitals	12.44%	28
Other (please specify)	18.22%	41
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>33</b>

Q24. I work with internationally-renowned UK arts institutions:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	14.22%	32
Rarely	20.00%	45
Sometimes	45.33%	102
Often	15.11%	34
Very often	5.33%	12
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>33</b>

Q25. I work with internationally-renowned UK arts institutions such as (tick all that apply):

Answer Choices	Responses	
Baltic	7.11%	16
Barbican	18.22%	41
BBC	12.89%	29
BFI	4.00%	9
British Library	8.00%	18
British Museum	2.22%	5
Edinburgh Festival	22.22%	50
FACT	4.44%	10
Manchester International Festival	10.22%	23
Nottingham Contemporary	4.89%	11
Sage Gateshead	2.67%	6
Southbank Centre	25.33%	57
Tate Britain/Liverpool/Modern/St Ives	23.11%	52
V&A	12.44%	28
Wellcome Trust and Collection	19.56%	44
Whitworth Art Gallery	6.67%	15
Yorkshire Sculpture Park	1.33%	3
None of the above	25.78%	58
Other (please specify)	19.11%	43
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>225</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>33</b>



Q26. I have received commissions and/or invitations from national and international promoters:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never / Not applicable	29.78%	67
Rarely	21.78%	49
Sometimes	35.11%	79
Often	9.33%	21
Very often	4.00%	9
	Answered	225
	Skipped	33

Q27. I have received critical reviews of my work in academic and non-academic publications:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never / Not applicable	36.89%	83
Rarely	22.67%	51
Sometimes	30.22%	68
Often	7.56%	17
Very often	2.67%	6
	Answered	225
	Skipped	33

Q28. My work has been referenced and quoted by creative and cultural institutions:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never / Not applicable	30.22%	68
Rarely	24.44%	55
Sometimes	29.33%	66
Often	12.00%	27
Very often	4.00%	9
	Answered	225
	Skipped	33

Q29. My work has been referenced and quoted in the mainstream media:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never / Not applicable	36.89%	83
Rarely	28.00%	63
Sometimes	28.44%	64
Often	5.33%	12
Very often	1.33%	3
	Answered	225
	Skipped	33

Q30. I act as a paid consultant/adviser to cultural organisations as a result of the work that I do:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	43.44%	96
Rarely	24.89%	55
Sometimes	23.98%	53
Often	6.33%	14
Very often	1.36%	3
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q31. I have had significant paid opportunities (commissions, running workshops, speaking / presenting, teaching) as a result of being involved with networks in the Live Art sector:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	13.57%	30
Disagree	20.36%	45
Neutral	30.77%	68
Agree	29.41%	65
Strongly Agree	5.88%	13
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q32. Throughout my years working with/in Live Art I have received grants/funding:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	19.91%	44
Rarely	16.74%	37
Sometimes	34.84%	77
Often	20.36%	45
Very often	8.14%	18
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q33. In the last 5 years, the average amount of funding I have received per grant is:

Answer Choices	Responses	
None	24.89%	55
less than £1,000	8.60%	19
between £1,000 to £5,000	14.48%	32
between £5,000 to £15,000	28.96%	64
between £15,000 to £40,000	16.29%	36
between £40,000 to £100,000	2.26%	5
more than £100,000	4.52%	10
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q34. I contribute to crowdfunding and fundraising initiatives to support artist projects, organisations and other initiatives in the Live Art sector:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	16.29%	36
Rarely	25.34%	56
Sometimes	47.06%	104
Often	11.31%	25
Very often	0.00%	0
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q35. I contribute non-financial support to the Live Art sector:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Never	9.05%	20
Rarely	9.95%	22
Sometimes	32.58%	72
Often	30.32%	67
Very often	18.10%	40
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Q36. What kind of non-financial support do you contribute to the Live Art sector (for example unpaid labour, care, housing, mentoring)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Answered	221
	Skipped	37

Free text answers not included due to privacy concerns

Q37. How do you describe your ethnicity?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Free text answers not included due to privacy concerns

Q38. I identify as a person of colour/ from a Black Asian Minority Ethnic background (BAME) - [We acknowledge the highly problematic categorisation system of self-identification at play here, which is often used by arts and cultural institutions]:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	18.52%	40
No	75.93%	164
Prefer not to say	5.56%	12
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Q39. I identify as a person with a disability [We acknowledge the highly problematic categorisation system of self-identification at play here. We adopt the social model of disability in our research]:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	22.22%	48
No	68.52%	148
Prefer not to say	9.26%	20
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42



Q40. I belong to the age group:

Answer Choices	Responses	
18 - 25	7.41%	16
26 – 30	10.19%	22
31 – 41	41.67%	90
42 – 55	27.31%	59
56 and above	11.57%	25
Prefer not to say	1.85%	4
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Q41. I best describe my gender identity as:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	54.17%	117
Male	32.87%	71
Non Binary	6.48%	14
Prefer not to say	6.48%	14
Prefer to self describe		7
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Q42. Legal status [you can tick two that apply]:

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am an EU national	29.63%	64
I am a non-EU national	7.41%	16
I am a British citizen	72.69%	157
Prefer not to say	2.78%	6
Other (please specify)	6.02%	13
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Q43. My highest educational qualification is:

Answer Choices	Responses	
No formal qualification	0.46%	1
Secondary school	0.93%	2
Language Certification/ESOL	0.00%	0
Further Education	2.31%	5
Higher Education (graduate)	28.24%	61
Higher Education (post-graduate)	64.81%	140
Vocational Training	0.93%	2
Prefer not to say	2.31%	5
Other (please specify)		5
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Q44. Please tell us about the occupation of your main household earner (or primary caregiver) when you were aged 14? [This question helps us understand the socio-economic backgrounds of who works with/in Live Art, as used by the Social Mobility Employer Index]

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Free text answers not included due to privacy concerns

Q45. Is there anything you'd like to add that has not been addressed in this survey (for instance around working conditions, community and networking, access and inclusion)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Answered	216
	Skipped	42

Free text answers not included due to privacy concerns

# Biographies

## The Live Art sector research collective

Dr Cecilia Wee (co-lead of the research collective) is an independent curator, educator and agitator, addressing equitable infrastructures for art and social action, working with experimental sound, performance, visual practices. Cecilia has edited books, curated exhibitions, events and led research projects with organisations including Akademie der Künste Berlin, Heart of Glass, Live Art Development Agency, Resonance FM, and Tate. Cecilia is Visiting Tutor in Visual Communication at Royal College of Art and founder of tdwm studio.

Dr. Elyssa Livergant (co-lead of the research collective) is an artist, activist, researcher and educator. Her work centres on participatory and collaborative performance practices, cultural work, public space and local community organising. She supports artists and organisations with strategic guidance to produce equitable process-led change. She has participated in numerous international critical and artistic projects and publications alongside working with various arts activist groups in the UK. Elyssa has lectured at various institutions in London including the Royal Central School of Drama, Goldsmiths, Queen Mary and the University of Arts London.

Chinasa Vivian Ezugha is the founder of Live Art in Wymondham, a one day site-specific series of events that aimed to bring emerging artists working in Live Art to rural Norfolk. Her work has been presented in venues across Europe, America and the UK, including In Between Time (Bristol, 2017) and SPILL festival (Ipswich, 2018). She is the winner of the New Art Exchange Open Main Prize (2019), and recipient of the Santander Universities Post Covid-19 Performance Making Enterprise Award (2020), supported by Santander Universities and ICCE, Goldsmiths, University of London. Ezugha is also a Research Associate at the Centre for Contemporary Art Derry Londonderry.

Dr Johanna Linsley is Lecturer in Creative Practice at the University of Dundee, working between performance, interdisciplinary writing and sound studies. Her ongoing project Stolen Voices, in collaboration with Rebecca Collins, is a slowly evolving eavesdrop on the east coast of the UK, and it was shortlisted for a Scottish Award for New Music in 2021. She is co-director of the Centre for Scotland's Land Futures at the University of Dundee.

Dr Tarek Virani is Associate Professor of Creative Industries and Co-director of the Creative Economies Lab at the Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education at UWE Bristol. Previously, he was Deputy Director of Network: Queen Mary University of London's Centre for the Creative and Cultural Economy. His research interests spans a number of areas within the creative and cultural economy including: the role of intermediaries and social enterprises in the creative and cultural economy, cultural policy, artistic knowledge within locally bounded

artistic communities, new work spaces in the creative and cultural economy, the role of micro-community engagement in culture-led regeneration, the role of the creative and cultural economy intermediary, the link between the creative industries and local development, creative and cultural hubs, and the internationalisation of creative work. Tarek has done work for a number of local, national and international organisations including research institutions, governments and other stakeholders.

Dr Tim Jeeves has been making performance work for the last fifteen years, with an emphasis on how narratives around disability and health develop. Between 2011 and 2016, he directed the Arts Council England-supported Giving in to Gift festival, 'an ongoing conversation around ideas of generosity and reciprocity'. Since 2019, he has represented Liverpool Clubmoor as a city councillor, exploring the possibilities within mainstream politics to support the creation of a socialist future.

### Live Art Development Agency (LADA)

Founded in 1999, LADA is a Centre for Live Art based in East London. Whether you are an artist, curator, writer, producer, student, educator, researcher or activist, LADA is here to help you understand, appreciate, dig into, and take inspiration from a huge breadth of Live Art and performance practices – contemporary and historic. All LADA's specialised resources, opportunities, projects and events are driven by an unwavering commitment to experimentation and risk, to the sustainability of our planet, and to difference and diversity in all its forms. [www.thisisliveart.co.uk](http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk)

### Live Art UK

Live Art UK is a network of 30 venues, promoters and facilitators who collectively represent a range of practices and are concerned with all aspects of the development and promotion of the Live Art sector. The network aims to be a representative voice for Live Art practices and initiatives in the UK. [www.liveartuk.org](http://www.liveartuk.org)



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*Live Art Sector Research Collective*

# Colophon and credits

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Live Art Development Agency (LADA)  
The Garrett Centre  
117A Mansford Street  
Bethnal Green  
London E2 6LX  
thisisliveart.co.uk

Editors and project leads: Cecilia Wee & Elyssa Livergant  
Research collective: Cecilia Wee, Elyssa Livergant, Chinasa Vivian Ezugha, Johanna Linsley, Tarek Virani and Tim Jeeves  
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*Live Art Sector Research - A Report*  
*Mapping the UK Live Art Sector* is the first ever survey of the sector's impact and influence. It will help readers to identify ways to support artists and organisations who work with a range of ambitious experimental, process-based, and participatory practices.



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