

# Curatorial Statement December 2020

## Bloc Projects

As we approach the end of what has been a turbulent year for many of us in the arts, it's a good opportunity to reflect on the last 6 months since our last Curatorial Statement and to give you an idea of what our plans are moving in 2021 and beyond.

Our last statement touched on some of the immediate challenges that we were facing during the first few months of the current pandemic, as well as challenging urgent concerns over systemic racism across the sector and culture as a whole. This involved us facing some difficult truths about elements of our programme, organisation and continues to inform the way we think about how we operate and future planning. We are very committed to making the necessary changes both in the short and long term, which we outlined within our [Follow up Statement](#).

It's no secret that organisations like ourselves have had to react to the constantly shifting nature of this pandemic and the restrictions that are being imposed as a result. One week we were planning on opening an exhibition, the next week we had to postpone it. Talks and events that have been planned to take place in the gallery were migrated to become online sessions. But despite this disruption, there have been some positive revelations. People from across the country are able to attend elements of our programme like never before. Armed with a Zoom link and a set of headphones--as opposed to a train ticket and a notepad--we have been lucky enough to welcome people from across the UK and further afield. Our Harsh Light webinar series in particular, developed by Sunshine Wong, has allowed us to have critical conversations around the future of the arts and Bloc Projects on a scale that we would never have expected, with regular attendees from London to Glasgow, Liverpool to Newcastle. We have also been able to introduce BSL interpretation as part of all of these events which has been an amazing learning experience. This is something we will be implementing in all of our online webinars moving forward.

2020 has been a year defined by the urgent need to listen and learn. Whether that is around accessibility to our programme and opportunities, or responding to the needs of our immediate community, the disruption(s) have necessitated a period of reflection. It's important that we keep checking ourselves and each other as we move into the new year.

This year has also made us think a lot more about what Bloc Projects is and what it could be. Very rarely are we afforded the time to really reflect on our aims and future aspirations. Often delivering projects at breakneck pace, this year has allowed for a few moments to pause, to plan and to consider the future. We have been asking important questions about the support that we currently offer artists and collaborators and how we can make this even more thorough.

We are also trying to build a method of working that is flexible enough to accommodate everyone's needs and the challenges that face us as we transition out of this immediate COVID-19 centred landscape. We have added new strands to our programme beginning next year, with more opportunities for artists with a multitude of different ways of working to become involved in our programme and be supported by our team. We are excited to announce that we have received generous funding from Arts Council England through their Project Grants scheme to support key elements of our 2021 programme, which allows us to continue being ambitious and to support artists and our publics in exciting new ways.

Another change for 2021 will be within our team itself. As of March next year, I will be stepping down as the Director to pursue another role elsewhere. Bloc Projects has been a home for me for the last 4 years, and the artists, collaborators, team and community that surrounds the organisations have supported me no end and for that I am forever grateful. I have had the opportunity to work with some truly amazing people that have had a lasting impact on me professionally and personally, and I have had the chance to make friendships that will stay with me into many future roles.

But as much as this is a mixture of emotions for me, it is also an incredibly exciting period for Bloc. Welcoming someone new to the team, and perhaps to the city of Sheffield will be the perfect start to the year and to the beginning of a new journey for Bloc. I am excited to come back and visit exhibitions, attend events and be part of Bloc in a different way.

2021 will be another layer built on the work of countless dedicated and passionate people who truly believe in the power of art. I am leaving the organisation in the more than capable hands of Sunshine and the team, and with an exciting opening for someone to come in and make a real impact. All I ask is that someone puts the kettle on when I drop by.

To next year...

David McLeavy

Director