

# **Not Going Back to Normal**

A report by Kim Simpson completed in July 2021

This project is funded by Creative Scotland through Engage Scotland and was initiated by them with the aim of improving the visibility of disability and disabled artists within gallery programmes in Scotland.



**Engage**  
Scotland

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## Introduction

Not Going Back To Normal is a collective manifesto project led by Harry Josephine Giles and Sasha Saben Callaghan and was published in 2020 online and in 2021 as a physical publication. Several years in the making, the project was initiated with strategic funding from Creative Scotland and the lead artists were commissioned by a partnership of organisations based in Scotland working within the visual arts. The commissioning partners were Collective (lead), Dundee Contemporary Arts, Arika, Artlink, Engage Scotland, Glasgow School of Art, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Project Ability and Scottish Sculpture Workshop.

The aim of the manifesto is to make visible the work and experience of disabled artists working in and navigating the visual arts sector in Scotland in order to identify ways in which partner organisations, and the wider sector, might remove barriers and work in a more anti-(dis)ableist<sup>1</sup> way.

The resulting manifesto project is available to view at <https://www.notgoingbacktonormal.com/> and comprises 49 contributions from artists within and beyond Scotland. The contributors were paid for their work and asked to respond to the following provocations:

- What would art be like if it was always centred on disabled people?
- How is art in Scotland set up to exclude disabled people and how would you change that?
- Can art ever include disabled people in a society which excludes us?
- Has the pandemic changed things, and what has it made clearer?

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'ableism' is used interchangeably to mean both ableism (discrimination in favour of non-disabled people) and disablism (discrimination against disabled people) – <https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/disablism/>

- If you could say anything to Creative Scotland and the institutions they support, what would it be?

This report takes as its starting point the language and intentions set out by the commissioned artists, Harry Josephine Giles and Sasha Saben Callahan, and is intended to amplify and underline the call to action catalysed through this project. The introduction to the manifesto states that it is “not a polite report” and it is the intention of this report to reinforce this message and to underline some of the recommendations for next steps that the partner organisations and the visual arts sector more widely could take.

At the outset, it is crucial to acknowledge and emphasise the outlet for justified anger that this manifesto has provided for disabled artists. It cannot be overstated the violence that is perpetrated on disabled people daily and Not Going Back To Normal has been courageous in ensuring the resulting works drive deep into the reader. It is impossible to experience this project without feeling moved by it. It is precisely this tone of raw truth that has made it so widely read and referenced in discussions and action across the UK and internationally.

“But although the times were frightening, we wouldn’t choose to go back to what came before. We were never normal, normal never worked for us anyway, normal was already silencing our voices and killing our friends. So instead of a wish for normality, we asked disabled artists to name the problem and picture the world they wanted to see. We wanted to hear about extravagant desires and wild ambitions.”

**Harry Josephine Giles and Sasha Saben Callahan**  
**NGBTN Lead Artists**

It is also vital to recognise that efforts made to evolve the visual arts sector’s work in a way that benefits disabled people lays foundations and thinking that can be developed to the benefit of many others that experience barriers accessing the cultural sector.

# Methodology

The methodology was as follows:

- Observation of the initial engagement workshops that took place on 21st May 2020 and 19th June 2020
- Review of the manifesto contributions themselves and the associated texts by the lead artists
- Interviews with the lead artists
- Interviews with the partners
- A wider referencing of strategic work happening in the area of disability around the UK and internationally

Demographic information was not collected for contributors so quantitative evaluation has not been included in this report. This takes the tone of a contextualising document that summarises and expands on the actions put forward in the manifesto and places them alongside work happening in the sector and the responses from the commissioning partners.

# Terms of reference, concepts and definitions

## Terms of reference

While not explicitly referenced, the core assumption running through this report is acceptance of the social model of disability, which can be further explored at: <https://www.shapearts.org.uk/News/social-model-of-disability>.

## Ableism

In light of the urgent need to consider equalities work in a context that recognises intersectionality and the resonances between anti-ableist work and other work such as anti-racism and trans-inclusive movements within the arts, this report is using the following definition of "ableism":

"A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism."

**A working definition by Talila "TL" Lewis\*; updated January 2021**  
***\*developed in community with Disabled Black and other negatively racialized people, especially Dustin Gibson.***

It should be noted that this is a definition developed in response to an intersectional, negatively racialised experience. It is used here with the intention of highlighting that in Scotland we must be thinking about intersections, but the use of this as a reference needs careful consideration. Also, as with much language and definition within this area of work – it is not universally accepted. Definitions are, and must remain, a dynamic area, however, the author proposes this definition as a way to underline the assertion that anti-ableist working with understanding of extreme exclusion can result in provision that is accessible for many types of lived experience. This should not replace



more targeted, specific, deep thinking and radical change to open up access for other marginalised groups, for example; negatively racialised people, transgender and non-binary artists.

### **Concept: Interpellation**

This report also uses the concept 'interpellation'<sup>2</sup>. This term is proposed as a way to reconsider the concept of inclusion as an end point that we should strive for in the arts, which for some can mean assimilation into a pre-existing and dominant culture.

"The term interpellation was an idea introduced by Louis Althusser (1918-1990) to explain the way in which ideas get into our heads and have an effect on our lives, so much so that cultural ideas have such a hold on us that we believe they are our own. Interpellation is a process, a process in which we encounter our culture's values and internalize them."

**Dr Chris McGee**

**Longwood University**

In contemporary society, it could be argued that we all exist in a social structure in which we have claimed identities and perform behaviours in line with those identities. Assumptions are written into the fabric of our world that inform how we behave these identities and 'disabled' is no exception. To take an interpellation perspective on something means paying attention to the process of internalisation that people are undergoing moment to moment. It is about recognising the widely accepted, unwritten, rituals, codes, practices and habits we accept as 'normal' in every aspect of our lives, including the cultural sector.

Using the concept of interpellation for this report reminds us that existing structures within the arts sector have their own rituals and

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<sup>2</sup> This political term was recently investigated in a programme called 'From inclusion to interpellation', led by [17 Institute of Critical Studies](#) Department of Disability Studies in Mexico City, Mexico, in partnership with [UNAM](#), Mexico and [British Council Mexico](#) and co-curated by Kim Simpson, author of this report. The programme brought together artists and practitioners from UK and Mexico in dialogue around the concept of interpellation to explore its potential applications as a useful term in disability and cultural contexts, particularly to move beyond the notion of inclusion as an end point in itself.

codes that are known, felt and lived by those typically and historically navigating within that structure each day (e.g. non-disabled, middle class, white, gender-normative). Inclusion of an 'othered' person/group (such as disabled, queer, negatively racialised, working class) into that existing structure requires that these codes be named, considered and rewritten.

Interpellation promotes identifying, accepting, allowing and actively enabling the personal and structural transformations required to allow an 'othered' person to thrive and the whole system to be changed by them, **to the benefit of that system, all of the people operating within it and society as a whole.** Culture is a huge tool of interpellation, in a social, sectoral and organisational sense. And it is also important to note that interpellation can be, and is, resisted all the time. And that as well as being a tool for interpellation, culture can be part of resisting, changing, transforming how we are interpellated.

### **A note on language**

As noted in the introduction, there is a distinction between the term 'ableism' and 'disablism' with the former being adopted widely within the cultural sector to describe both forms of discrimination. For the purposes of clarity and ease of understanding by those this report is intended to reach, the author uses the terms 'ableism' and 'anti-ableism' throughout.

The report also uses 'disabled artists/people' throughout to reference D/deaf, disabled, crip, spoonie, chronically ill, sick, mad, neurodiverse, autistic and other identities and definitions used within disability contexts.

'Negatively racialised' describes those who belong to an ethnic group that experiences racism, specifically Black, Asian and People of Colour. This is in light of recent critiques of the abbreviation BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic).

'Queer' and 'trans' are used specifically, in light of the more severe exclusions faced by these members of the LGBTQ+ community.

'Working class' is a broad term used to describe those facing social and economic barriers and/or from lower income backgrounds.

It is acknowledged and understood that all of these terms may be contested, depending on the reader. They are used with the best of intentions to communicate the findings of the report and its recommendations as clearly, sensitively and respectfully as possible.

## Why this? Why Now?

“Not Going Back to Normal is a provocation about how things are and an idea for how things could be.”

**Harry Josephine Giles and Sasha Callahan**

**NGBTN Lead Artists**

Part of set of live, national, wide and deep conversations intended to launch from the pandemic into a more anti-ableist future, Not Going Back To Normal sat alongside projects like #WeShallNotBeRemoved (now formalised into the Disability Arts Alliance) and Disability Arts Online essay series exploring and campaigning for a better future for disabled people in the arts and adjacent collectivising and change-making through programmes like the Freelance Task Force and Culture Reset. At the same time, similar movements have been growing to support our migrant/refugee, negatively racialised, transgender and non-binary artists. Our arts sector is undergoing urgent transformation.

Not Going Back To Normal has been some time in the making and the pandemic forced a rapid change in the context it was created within, which meant rethinking the project delivery in terms of engaging artists in dialogue and how the work would be presented and shared. It was also delivered against a backdrop of ever-evolving conditions for disabled artists.

The manifesto does not shy away from these realities, emphasising the contradictory forces of the time – solutions arise as problems deepen. While flexible working, remote access and financial support have been made available, somewhat frustratingly for those marginalised artists and practitioners who have been calling for these actions for decades, the Covid-19 pandemic has further isolated disabled people from society, from access to facilities for health and wellbeing, shielding, cuts to home healthcare to name a few. However, disabled people understand isolation, adaptability, and living with impairment at a time when the wider population are experiencing these things for the first time. We will have to grapple with loss, change and the impact of

Covid-19 on our public sectors for some time – never have disabled artists voices been more crucial to our society.

“Right now is the time to recognise crip wisdom, ill skills and D/deaf culture. These are the qualities that will see us through. We need to adapt, modify, survive and thrive... and disabled artists are expert. They must lead us forward, not be included afterwards.”

**Bel Pye**

### **NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpt**

In the manifesto introduction, the experience of discrimination and inclusion is noted as beginning early, highlighting the need for the arts and education sectors to work more closely to ensure disabled children and young people are accessing arts learning. This continues at further and higher education and professional practice with the need for an interpellation perspective to be applied to the built environment, communication, aesthetic and experiential differences, all well-documented as just some of the barriers stacking up against disabled people seeking to live and work as artists.

This manifesto takes place after much sector-focused work in this area led by organisations such as Unlimited, Birds of Paradise Theatre and strategic interventions from Creative Scotland and the oft-referenced Arts Council England Creative Case for Diversity. It should also be noted that the partner organisations have each achieved their own progress in some key areas while acknowledging the need for more and embracing the need for a project that will be critical and revelatory.

### **The current landscape**

The pre-Covid landscape contained many challenges for disabled artists. Those working in the visual arts face a real challenge when getting their work from studio to audience.

‘Personally, I think the visual arts is behind other art forms in relation to both access and the representation of disabled artists,’ she says. ‘Unlimited supports more people working in visual arts than in any other art form but has much less traction in relation to placing the

work in front of audiences [...] We've found curatorial circles particularly hard to break into.'

**Jo Verrent, Senior Producer, Unlimited**

**Quoted in Frieze, 2019**

We are currently in the later stages of Creative Scotland's 10 year plan 'Unlocking Potential, Embracing Ambition' which ends in 2024. During this time, some specific improvements to audience experience of art can be noted – it is becoming expected to offer an audio described exhibition, to offer touch tours of galleries and performances, to provide companion access to support workers, though there is some way to go before these practices are widely available and generally normalised. The more persistent challenges for the arts, and in the context of this particular manifesto, the visual arts, are the visibility and experience of disabled artists and understanding and changing the organisational, sectoral and social structures that must be in place to enable and empower disabled people who interact with them.

The 10-year plan names 'Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion' as one of its cross-cutting themes, focusing on 'mainstreaming' and 'inclusion'. The most recent report runs from 2017-2021. These outcomes are based on the improvement against four Equality Outcomes:

1. Our funding support reflects the (increasing) diversity of Scotland's population today
  - There is nothing currently reported against this outcome
2. Opportunities to attend, engage with and participate in the arts, screen and creative industries are inclusive and accessible throughout the country
  - Disabled people have lower cultural attendance (54%) than their non-disabled counterparts (88%)
  - Socio-economic deprivation influences cultural participation, it is more likely for those in areas of least deprivation (91%) than the most (72%)

- Disabled artist and leader, Caroline Bowditch, undertook an Agent for Change role within Scottish Dance Theatre for 4 years which is considered 'highly successful'
  - There is a focus on access for participants and audience members, listings and communication of CS support
  - There is a National Plan for BSL and investment from targeted funds means that access to performance training for BSL will be available
3. Employment patterns in the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland are fair, socially inclusive and reflect national data for gender, disability, ethnicity and age
- The Diversity in the Arts Survey (expanded on below) was commissioned to understand current barriers, which are primarily gender and economic limitations
  - Creative Scotland have an outcome that relates to the diversity of their own workforce
4. Creative Scotland staff have a genuine commitment to mainstream equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- Some outputs have been set for CS around training for Equality Impact at all levels
  - EDI training is part of staff induction
  - Personal Development Review will track knowledge and delivery
  - CS is a Disability Confident Employer
  - Staff are supported with an EDI learning programme
  - There is a staff equalities group

During this 10-year plan period, Creative Scotland have also required Regularly Funded Organisations to develop Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion plans alongside their 3-year business plans, though the impact of this has not yet translated into the broadly positive experience of the arts that we would hope to achieve for disabled people in Scotland. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact on these plans and reporting against them. In 2018, Creative Scotland launched Creative Scotland's Create:Inclusion Fund, which is a targeted fund specifically aimed at addressing gaps in representation across arts,

culture and screen industries. Most recently, they recruited an EDI Advisory Group who will be in place for two years until January 2023.

The 2016 Understanding Diversity in the Arts, commissioned by Creative Scotland, states that 30% of people who work in the arts identify as disabled. While this exceeds the national population of 19%, it is really crucial to note that this was an online survey, completed by people who self-selected. Some key figures:

- From the whole set of respondents, only 21% were successful in applying for funding in the five years prior, no specific data on disabled applicants is currently available
- Almost half of the respondents had financial support from family and friends and of this group, 56% were disabled, highlighting the financial barriers that exist for disabled people
- The intersection of disability and location can create challenging barriers for artists, as 58% of arts workers are based in Glasgow or Edinburgh and 26% of disabled people stated that geography is a 'significant' barrier
- The arts is also 'comparatively privileged' so those disabled artists who are also on low-incomes or have little to no support from their families are further excluded from the sector
- 52% of the respondents undertook internships or placements and around a third of these were unpaid, meaning these are likely to be inaccessible for disabled people
- Income generated from the arts is lower than other sectors
- The survey does not cover how many disabled people are in leadership positions within organisations, how many work within organisations or how many are freelance
- Disabled people are more likely than their non-disabled counterparts to experience "very significant" economic limitations such as poverty or socio-economic background
- Disabled people are more likely to find accessing training too costly
- 68% of the people who responded stated that making contacts and networks are a barrier to working, something reflected in the 'tyranny of networking' observation from the manifesto



- For those disabled people who reported their condition 'reduces their ability to carry out day to day activities a lot', 92% state it as a barrier in their careers

For the visual arts, there is a unique challenge. Disabled people tend to report lower prevalence of barriers when practicing in this art form, however there is a lack of visibility of disabled artists that do practice. Unlike some art forms that rely more on collaborating, it can be less necessary to disclose disabled status. However, the data shows that disabled people are more likely to be facing economic limitations or find it challenging to access training or networks, further excluding them from the sector. The fact of being disabled is less the challenge than the financial implications of it.

"In the UK 44.3% of working age-disabled people are economically inactive, a figure that is nearly 4 times higher than for non-disabled people, 11.5 % of whom are economically inactive (Papworth Trust: Disability in the United Kingdom 2016). Disability remains closely associated with social issues including unemployment, homelessness, poverty, lack of qualifications, debt, and, most worrying of all, limited life expectancy. Deaf and disabled people are consistently subject to a raft of barriers from attitudes to lack of physical access, which prevents equality of life opportunities and independence"

**Ruth Gould**

**Disability Arts**

The post-Covid context brings further pressures. As the UK Disability Arts Alliance found in its 2021 survey, the national landscape is 'shockingly fragile'. While this takes into account the whole of the UK, it can be assumed that Scotland-based artists will be subject to similar forces as a result of Covid. Key findings include:

- Half of the respondents have seen their work fall by half, or lost completely
- Half did not claim financial support from the government or funding bodies
- Only 7% are employed on a full-time salaried basis

- One third are precariously employed or on 'zero hours' contracts
- A further third have experienced homelessness
- Nearly two thirds are concerned they may need to leave the creative industries

Lack of appropriate resourcing presents the arts and cultural sector with an existential crisis; there is a danger of significant talent drain and the best of our disabled artists, potential artists of the future and those at other margins no longer being able to survive in or influence the sector or our society through culture. We are also at risk of limiting the range of disabled artists that practice as artists, as this is a diverse group in itself.

"Some people will still be at risk when lockdown ends.  
To reduce incidences of exclusionary behaviour, practice  
consideration daily."

**CL Gamble**

**NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpt**

## Where do the issues lie?

"I've been thinking about this submission for weeks, trying to come up with something witty and inventive or whatever, but this is all I've got. The arts may be online now, but it's still an abled and financially-privileged model of the arts. If no other meaningful work is done to en-able disabled people to participate, what's the fucking point. My ultimate proposal is to abolish money, by the way."

**Chris Belous**

### **NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpt**

NGBTN rightly identifies that the challenges faced by disabled artists and other marginalised people are "deep and systemic". In a society in which disabled people are facing significant financial barriers and attitudes that are in conflict with the social model of disability, it stands to reason that the cultural sector replicates and perpetuates those challenges.

"And I know the extraordinary strength it takes to keep reaching out to a world that doesn't know I exist. I would like it to reach back."

**KM Dunn**

### **NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpt**

While 'Disability Arts' is a long-standing political movement in the UK, and change has been sought to enable and empower a more equitable culture for all marginalised people in Scotland, what is different about this work at this time is that it is taking place during a pandemic that has shifted collective consciousness and during a technological boom that means the necessary mindset and approaches to resolve some of these challenges have never been more in reach.

Data provided by key funders within this context sheds some further light on the problem. In most cases, funders have not tracked demographic data consistently over time. This is for a range of reasons; it has only been requested in more recent years, reporting can be inconsistent in terms of the type of data provided, some people and organisations choose not to disclose certain types of information and

there are gaps in reporting on equalities as submission of equalities monitoring is not mandatory. This seems to be a consistent challenge both at Creative Scotland and with key trusts and foundations. Trusts and foundations also reported a lower level of Scottish awards meaning that their data may be less helpful. Unlimited, as the key commissioning body working to support disabled artists, was also approached for their data and perspective.

Choosing not to disclose a disabled status may speak to the possible issue of real or perceived stigma when working with funders, or perhaps a more general challenge in claiming a disabled identity. Creative Scotland are developing a refreshed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and moving to an online application process, both of which means that tracking this kind of data will become more consistent. It must be noted that any kind of monitoring raises its own complex issues around labelling and homogenising groups that are highly diverse within themselves, how this challenge is navigated is an equally complex a question that this report is unable to answer.

In terms of supplied data, some detail around whether projects are by/for/with disabled artists, participants, audiences or other is not available.

For the reasons above, the data below only tells some of the story as it relates to disabled artists practicing within the visual arts in Scotland specifically and should be treated as a barometer of what is currently known about funding disabled visual artists, as opposed to a true and complete account.

Creative Scotland reported that between 1st April 2016 and 31st May 2021:

- 116 Targeted Funds Awards were made towards activities where Visual Arts was the main artform and/or where Visual Arts was one of the artforms within Multi-artform category
  - Of these, 2 awards were noted as having a disability focus
  - This data is gathered by projects' Creative Scotland lead officer

- 23 Regularly Funded Organisations had Visual Arts as the main artform
  - Of these, no awards were noted as having a disability focus
  - This data is gathered through annual survey looking at workforce, governance and reach through programming, engagement and outreach as well as marketing and audience development
- 442 Open Funds Awards were made to applicants which self-declared Visual Arts as the main artform and/or where Visual Arts was one of the artforms within Multi-artform category
  - Of these, 34 awards had disability focus, including where disability was part of the focus alongside other diversity characteristics
  - This data is taken from the Statistical Information completed by Open Fund assessors

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Paul Hamlyn Foundation publish their grants on the [360Giving GrantNav](#) portal. A search of the last 5 years shows that one grant was made by Paul Hamlyn Foundation for a project with disabled visual artists, to Project Ability, focusing on the 'studio model and workshop practice'. It should be noted that this focus area could be considered to be dealing in **interpellation**. EFF has not supported anything in this area. Other trusts and foundations searched on GrantNav have funded projects which have more of an art therapy approach than supporting professional disabled artists.

Jerwood Arts responded with national data which shows that between 2019 and 2020 10% of their support went to applicants based in Scotland. Of all the Jerwood Arts applicants in that time, across the UK and across artform, 26.2% of their selected applicants reported disability.

Unlimited reports that in the last round of commissioning 11% of the projects were in the Visual Arts, with 42% for Combined arts which may include visual arts. They also say that while visual arts is 'one of the highest supported categories' it often doesn't seem that way due to the way the visual arts functions, in contrast with artforms such as

performance, where the dialogues around disability have been happening longer.

The data suggests that there are significant gaps in resourcing disabled visual artists and that the lack of visibility of disabled visual artists further compounds the perception, and in turn, the reality of disabled visual artists experiencing significant challenges to accessing careers in this artform.

## Partner responses

“The Ableism of Networks” “Recovery Time is Labour Time”

**Simon Yiull**

### **NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpts**

Collective (lead), Dundee Contemporary Arts, Arika, Artlink, Engage Scotland, Glasgow School of Art, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Project Ability and Scottish Sculpture Workshop. Each organisation was interviewed for this report. The questions and anonymised responses are outlined below.

#### **1. What is the background, need and purpose of this project, from your perspective?**

- To shed light on current gaps and persistent discrimination
- To challenge organisations operating in the visual arts and to challenge Creative Scotland
- Moving beyond short-term access considerations to something more integral, programming disabled artists and embedding disabled people into organisational structures
- A need to move away from targeted programmes and into long-term systemic and structural change
- There was a necessary shift in thinking from audience-focused access to considering disabled artists
- An observation that disabled artists are much less visible in the visual arts, and often they don't disclose
- It took some time – several years, how can work like this move more quickly?
- A desire to have a deep impact with limited funds
- There was a recognition of the urgency and importance of anti-ableist working to be improved but little sense of how to achieve that
- Bringing together organisations at different stages to learn from each other, some with better policy, some with better facilities, that are aiming to define some commitments and actions

- An opportunity to exchange and work together, challenging the notion that visual arts all takes place in galleries
- A desire to challenge the perception that disabled artists are making work of poorer quality
- To unearth the work and provocations of disabled artists
- A need to recognise each partners' own barriers
- Selecting lead artists that would be critical in their approach
- To capture how the pandemic created a more challenging context and circumstances for disabled artists
- No-one from this partnership group disclosed that they were disabled
- To challenge the notion of 'inclusion' and to recognise the dominance and independent existence of 'othered' communities; disability cultures already exist!
- It still feels like we are not doing well enough here...

## **2. What were you hoping the project would achieve?**

- A critical approach, which is why Harry Josephine Giles was asked to lead the project, who then invited Sasha Saben Callahan and made the manifesto collective
- To be challenged and asked to do things differently
- To understand more about the whole landscape of work to support disabled artists
- To put this work higher on our own agenda
- To move beyond a generic commitment to EDI and drill deeper into what actually takes place
- To promote action
- To clarify what is about resource and what is about state of mind
- To stimulate change from the ground up
- To visibilise disabled visual artists
- To move away from a tick-box approach
- To highlight current thinking and to make better choices
- To highlight experiences of disabled artists at other intersections, such as rurality-based
- To unpick structural ableism
- To learn and exchange with partners more closely



- To learn about people and things we didn't know about
- To strengthen our programme
- To move ourselves from being part of the problem to part of the solution
- A strident manifesto containing radical politics
- To offer a pathway for the future, beyond where we are now, for those already moving forward in this area – raising the ceiling rather than lifting up the floor
- Something brilliant

### **3. What did you notice about the manifesto?**

- Handing it over to Harry Josephine and Sasha was a really great decision
- It was a starting point, a useful point of discussion, change, refreshed thinking
- One project isn't enough
- It asks for self-examination from institutions
- It frames what some views of change look like
- People still feel excluded, and are excluded; they face barriers and are unseen and ignored
- The need to place disabled artists at the centre of work, not as an add-on
- The issues were stated clearly but possible solutions were also proposed
- Some of these things are not huge
- It raises the question of how we respond in a positive way
- The realisation that we need to change how we work
- The power structures at play repeat across different identity-based movements where exclusion is experienced
- These power structures mean this work is linked to other work by marginalised groups and movements
- There is a need for online spaces to discuss ideas as a sector, away from the market-driven sites of organisations and institutions
- There is a moment of awareness as people experience lockdown
- We are all human

- That it was directed at Creative Scotland, which was not anticipated
- It was widely publicised
- The need to underpin the manifesto with commitments, specific actions to take forward
- That the contributions were presented on their own terms
- That money isn't everything, there is a question of how to meet needs
- The shift in context does mean we can't go back to normal... it strengthened the project that it happened during the pandemic
- We need to put our money where our mouth is and reprioritise our budgets
- Made us aware of things taken for granted; the ableism within networks, and networking, the need for rest and recovery time
- How events are structured to be exclusive
- How we recruit – offering interviews, paying access costs, remote interviews
- The website format works well as something to easily return to
- The polyvocal nature of it is a strength
- The range of responses made it richer
- The work is of really good quality
- It practiced its politics
- There is a momentum here

The partners were then asked to respond to a follow up question by email, to which there were fewer responses:

### **1. What commitments are you able to make in the immediate term?**

- Our commitment is to embrace and celebrate diversity in the arts and make spaces for artists to connect with one another
- Facilitating the sharing and dissemination of learning that has emerged from the NGBTN project
- Add links to the website and can discuss a case study with the artists as appropriate

- Meet with Creative Scotland and, importantly, the other key stakeholders to talk about next steps and who should take this work forward
- Collaborate on a sharing event or seminar that may emerge from this project during 2021
- We absolutely commit to carrying out further research, through reading and exploring the work of artists who made submissions to the manifesto
- Carrying out studio visits with disabled artists
- Exploring how we might capture and support people's access requirements, particularly through benchmarking with other organisations
- Allocating resources to make meeting these requirements possible

## **2. What areas will you focus on in the future, and when?**

- We will focus on giving people a platform for their work to be seen by audiences
- We continue to be committed to promoting equality and diversity in galleries and the visual arts in Scotland
- We aim to promote this throughout our programmes, including when they are not necessarily badged as focusing on access and inclusion
- Areas of interest include mainstreaming access for disabled people
- We are looking at offering training and support, led by a visually impaired equalities trainer, around breaking down barriers to access for visually impaired visitors, hopefully in the spring of 2021
- We would like to see better representation of disabled artists in our exhibitions programme
- To work with disabled curators as one of our future co/guest curators

### **3. What challenges exist in terms of realising these commitments and what is needed to remove them?**

- The barriers are as always resources – mostly financial
- Currently time, capacity and probably funding are barriers/ challenges to realising these commitments.
- Conscious of needing to keep asking whether we are the right people to be doing this work and who I should be including in the conversation, i.e. working more closely with people with lived experience of disability
- Finding ways to genuinely engage and involve more disabled people in these conversations is important along with having good, open conversations with funders to think about the best ways of supporting this work, and of handing agency over to disabled people
- Lack of knowledge has been a significant issue, so a commitment to researching and expanding our knowledge base will be essential
- Expectations have started to change significantly over recent months and we want to be able to capitalise on this
- Funding will be key and we will lobby Creative Scotland and other funders to ensure monies are made available to support disabled artists and to support organisations support disabled artists

## **Ten recommendations**

This report reinforces the actions noted in the manifesto.

Fundamentally, what the manifesto asks is for attention to be moved away from the notion of 'widening access', i.e. offering 'opportunities' to disabled artists and responding to their needs on a case by case basis, inflicting much harm on the artists engaged in this way, and instead to use their significant influence and resource to challenge the attitudinal and structural barriers that exist within the cultural sector and as a result of ableism in society more widely, which cements the barriers artists are facing.

### **Recommendations emerging from the manifesto**

#### **1. Policy makers and organisations with power must demand social change**

The lead artists note the need for recognition of the fact that the arts sector reflects the biases and attitudes of wider Scottish society. The shifts required exist at a much deeper and more entrenched level than the sector is working. The arts hold a unique position and potential to challenge the current social context. The arts sector needs to take a much stronger lead in this area rather than being subject to forces that perpetuate inaccessibility. In practice this could mean paid learning time and collation of the most up-to-date thinking and resources, collective influencing of Scottish Government policies, ensuring people and programmes are anti-ableist future focused and present a reality that we, as a society, want to move towards. The depth of understanding and lived experience sits most with disabled people themselves and they should be properly resourced partners in making this social change.

#### **2. Organisations must commit to making radical changes themselves**

There is a pattern of work that focuses on 'widening access' – creating direct opportunities for disabled artists to deliver a commission or lead

an area of work within an organisation that is not fully able to support them. Organisations must take an interpellation perspective, seeking to embed disability-led thinking within their organisations alongside a will to change and evolve in response to that thinking. In practice this could mean recruiting three or more disabled people in order that they can support each other to challenge how organisations are set up, and ensuring all staff are supported to carry this work through the organisation. This may be supported by leadership development and research, coaching, action learning and shared implementation so that disabled people are not left holding the weight of change. It may mean shared leadership roles with disabled people, or leaders stepping aside to make way for disabled leadership.

### **3. Creative Scotland must work with disabled leaders with a view to the board and leadership comprising disabled people**

It is noted that Creative Scotland have recently announced an EDI Advisory Group. Visibility is a key component of change in this area. It is unclear how many members of the EDI Advisory Group identify as disabled. This is likely to influence some change, however the manifesto calls for whoever makes up this group, that 'the less accommodating and the less normal [they are] the better'. It is too early in its existence to say whether this is the nature of this group though impact will be reported by Creative Scotland. This work must be monitored by Creative Scotland and the sector and this must also be considered a stepping stone towards Creative Scotland taking an interpellation perspective on its own structures, codes and processes in order that disabled leadership within the organisation can be properly supported and emerge, ensuring our national funder is able to lead in this area.

### **4. Advocate for unconditional income support for all**

The manifesto noted unprecedented support for artists made available in the context of the global pandemic, advocates for the 'creative potential' of this and proposes that it be continued beyond the

pandemic. This asks that Creative Scotland apply pressure to Scottish Government to make an unconditional income available to the Scottish population. This pressure can come from RFOs, nationally funded organisations such as Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet, advocacy bodies such as Culture Counts, collective action (such as this manifesto) from individuals working within the sector. This is a wider social policy that would have a deep impact on disabled people's lives and the potential of the arts and the cultural sector.

## **5. Set a requirement for all funded organisations and institutions to reach 20% disabled people through their work or funding is withdrawn**

The most immediate, direct and practical action is to set specific and non-negotiable expectations that RFO organisations, national organisations and any organisation or institution in receipt of funding from Creative Scotland reach the percentage of disabled people that is currently represented within the working age population. Currently RFO organisations are 'in the process' of being required to complete EDI Action Plans, however the manifesto contributions speak to frustratingly slow progress and persistent, significant barriers still preventing disabled artists from participating fully, and sometimes at all. This approach may be considered controversial, and would require that there is support in place for funded organisations to make the kind of radical leaps required in order to reach these targets. Sector wide leadership support, action learning and coaching, action research and transparency around budget setting, crucially in appropriately paid partnership with disabled people, may support the sector to achieve these targets more quickly.

## **Recommendations emerging from the report**

### **6. We must do less, better**

As a publicly funded sector, straddling this and the commercial context, with growing pressure to diversify income streams and to secure

funding in an increasingly competitive landscape, it is clear that organisations within the cultural sector are attempting to offer more and more for less and less. Within this context it is extremely challenging to allocate 20% of resources to access, never mind recruiting and hiring enough disabled people to ensure that they can influence change without being subjected to enormous harm. As a sector, we must collectively rethink our priorities and understand what kinds of resources are required to address the inequality that currently exist. We must also work better in partnership, enabling a smarter sector to emerge.

## **7. We must work in an integral and intersectional way**

If we continue to offer only public facing programmes that widen access for specific and silo-ed identity groups, we will tie ourselves in knots and achieve little. It is vital to consider the make-up of our teams, structures of our organisations and sector, assumptions around 'how things work'. It is crucial to collaborate closely with those that have diverse lived experiences and those that exist at multiple intersections and to take account of their entire experience and wisdom, not just the parts that fit assumption and expectation. There are resonances in terms of the barriers faced by disabled people and those faced by working class artists, Black artists, people of colour, trans practitioners, care-experienced people, under-represented faith groups. There are also differences. We must approach this work with consideration of the most complex identities, in order to make the sector accessible for the many.

## **8. We must actively learn**

We must be engaged in a continuous, committed process of learning and reflection around creating an anti-ableist sector. Disability is part of humanity. Economic inequality is a reality. Intersectionality is everywhere. As a sector, we must be able to lift our awareness beyond the urgency of our day-to-day delivery to connect with what we have not yet learned in this area. We must challenge that learning as the conversation evolves. We must share and engage with the myriad



writings, reflections and provocations made by the disabled people in culture and the arts and the organisations and movements that work daily to make change, such as Birds of Paradise, Unlimited, We Shall Not Be Removed, Disability Arts Online. We must be willing to interrogate how we do everything, and to take an interpellation perspective on every interaction, assumption, dynamic, communication and decision that we make.

## **9. We must understand the tools that we have available**

Technology and the digital world have huge parts to play in the provision of access within the arts. The pandemic has led to the springing up of online performance, festivals and exhibitions and people are able to work remotely in ways that were not possible before. Technology offers so many possibilities for both audience and artist accessing the arts. This must be embraced but also properly understood. New exclusions are emerging in the online space. Digital poverty, overwhelm and the challenge of visually impaired people or others using screen-readers are all significant barriers for a sector working to migrate some of its work online and to be able to access tech tools. Proper resourcing and learning around the challenges present with online working (not to mention the real environmental costs), and tech for making is crucially important. The pandemic has catalysed an enormous change in the way we work, and with it we are walking into an unknown landscape, one that we must properly understand.

## **10. We must understand the differences between mainstreaming, inclusion and disability-led**

This manifesto and report both offer up a critique of the terms 'mainstreaming' and 'inclusion'. 'Mainstreaming' is only one approach to ensuring disabled people can access the arts which carries an implied assumption all disabled artists want to be in the 'mainstream'. And, while it is the accepted language of the sector at the moment, 'inclusion' is also under lively reconsideration as a useful term – what are we including disabled people into, who is doing the including and

what is lost or changed in the process of being included? There is the matter of disability-led contexts that can, do and must exist in more their own spaces, emerging out of their own cultures, but still deserve and require resourcing, and are part of assuring that disabled artists can make and present their work and ideas on their own terms and in their own radically anti-ableist spaces.

'Disability culture must arise out of the spontaneous desire of disabled people to share our feelings, experiences and desires, our loves and hates, our pleasures as well as our sufferings, amongst ourselves. In other words, we have to make the choice that we want to identify ourselves as disabled people. We have to be willing to express our separate identity. There can be no disability culture without this freely made choice.'

**Vic Finklestein**

"I do not sing for you. And I am not singing for you"

**Penny Anderson**

**NGBTN Manifesto contribution excerpt**

## **NGBTN in the sector**

Not Going Back To Normal gained/will gain traction in seven key ways;

1. Through the callout which resulted in 49 responses that were featured in the online gallery
2. Through the two workshops which provided a space to connect with each other and attracted more than 20 people who responded to some of the key questions
3. Through the launch of the manifesto as an online gallery
4. Through the creation of a physical publication
5. Through the referencing and sharing of the manifesto since its launch
6. Through this report
7. Through a sharing event planned for the Collective symposium in October 2021

With each phase, the project was shared on social media, callouts were circulated, the resulting gallery posted on walls and feeds as well as introduced to discussions around anti-ableism in the UK and internationally. The sharing of this report will provide another moment to talk about the manifesto.

The manifesto has already been a useful document within the sector. It has been referenced in an exchange programme between UK and France facilitated by [British Council France](#) and [ONDA](#) called [Cycle Thématique](#), and informed a session at [Seminar of Disability and Performance: From Inclusion to Interpellation](#) with [British Council Mexico](#), [University of Arts Mexico](#) and [17 Institute of Critical Studies in Mexico](#), which Harry-Josephine Giles presented at. The manifesto was discussed at [ISPA New York](#) and at [Tanz Im August](#) in Berlin. It has been sent and shared within the sector through networks such as [Clare Leadership](#), the Scottish Facebook group Admin Monkeys and was used as an inspiration for Manifold Avenues (pending completion), a collective manifesto project for Black Scottish Freelancers led by Mele Broomes with support from Kim Simpson while on the [Freelance Task Force](#). It was shared within the Freelance Task Force, [Culture Reset](#), [We](#)

Shall Not Be Removed and within the new Inclusive Cultures programme that Clore Leadership are offering to leaders in arts and culture. It was used in an advent calendar with the Finnish Institute. The manifesto is a crucial document of artists' needs, desires and experiences, provides a deeply affecting and rich resource for organisations and institutions engaged in this work, as well as sounding a claxon for the urgency of sectoral and social change.

## The first steps

Some initial thoughts on what might come next for Not Going Back To Normal

- Revisit partner evaluation questions 4-6 with the partners
- Undertake a reflection session with all the partners and lead artists, perhaps include some input from contributors to the manifesto itself
- Communicate the project and the report with the sector
- Translate the findings into actions, creating accountability and transparency around commitments made by the participating organisations and Creative Scotland
- Set up an action learning group between the commissioning partners ensuring actions are taken forward and reflected on
- Ensure appropriate resources are allocated to this work and learning

## Conclusion

This evaluation report has illustrated the need and the impact of the Not Going Back To Normal Manifesto and made recommendations jointly with the manifesto itself. The sector must work smarter, in collaboration with – and led-by – fully resourced disabled artists and leaders. This work also does not exist in a vacuum: while focused on data around disability in particular, this report has attempted to place this conversation and set of challenges within the wider context of transformation that the cultural sector, and indeed, society itself is undergoing.

We must remember that while disabled people make up 19% of the Scottish population, many of those people, and more, exist at other intersections of identity, experiencing socio-economic barriers, caring responsibilities, and/or are negatively racialised people, older people, refugees and migrants, queer and trans people. This multi-dimensional reality cannot be ignored. It is worth remembering also that the vast majority of disabled people are in the Global Majority (or Global South and diaspora), while cultural cues around disability arts come from the Global North, especially the UK. Not Going Back To Normal demands that we change those cues.

The recommendations offer a way forward and are an invitation to organisations and policy makers within the cultural sector to make critical change happen.

Disabled people are not going anywhere. And they are demanding an end to “normal”.

## Kim Simpson

Based in Glasgow, Kim Simpson is a disabled spoonie who has worked primarily as an independent producer, curator and strategist. Attracted to working in the 'connective tissue' of arts and culture, Kim is concerned with making links, sharing knowledge, strengthening relationships and systems while bringing her passion for people, equality, ideas and change to a global world and interconnected time. Recent work includes senior roles with Take Me Somewhere, Made in Scotland Festival Brussels, Tramways Unlimited Festival and curation of seminar sessions and series in anti-ableism with partners in Mexico, Germany and USA. She is a Clore Fellow, an Action Learning Facilitator and RD1st Coach. Since June 2021 Kim has been Programme Manager at greenspace scotland, leading a national programme of Covid memorial projects, co-created with communities across Scotland.

**COLLECTIVE**