



**COUNTERPOINTS.**

**OUR  
PLAN  
2023-27**



## OUR PLAN 2023-27

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# INTRODUCTION



Our plan has been informed by strategic conversations and planning sessions held over the last 18 months, involving our team, trustees, artists, advisors, partners, participants and wider networks. It is thanks to their generous feedback and views that we have been able to shape this plan and articulate our aspirations for the coming period.

The plan is also informed by and builds on a series of existing reports and strategic documents, including the independent, narrative-based evaluation of our work and practice, *Our Story and Vision*. The full list of internal and external reports and documents that have shaped this plan is included in the Appendix under 'Needs Analyses'.

The plan is also linked to the ongoing commitments we have defined within our

various funding applications to our existing funders, including Arts Council England, Unbound Philanthropy, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and others.

In developing this business plan, we have been acutely aware of the dramatically changing external context — ridden with social, economic, climate and mental health crises — in which our work is taking place. This has required us to approach our planning with a great degree of flexibility, agility and a commitment to regular reviewing and updating.

LEFT: *We Apologize*, Adrian Paci, Counterpoints Arts and Victoria Square Project, Victoria Square Athens Greece, 2021. © Nefeli Papaioannou

# ABOUT US

Counterpoints Arts is a leading organisation in the field of arts, refugees, migration and cultural change. We are based in London, working nationally and internationally.

Founded in 2012, we were the first arts organisation in the UK to engage strategically with displacement and migration at the national level. Since then, we have supported and collaborated with hundreds of artists and organisations, pioneering a major cultural shift which has seen the voices and experiences of displaced communities expanding from the margins of our society to its mainstream spaces and institutions.

Our ambition over the next four years is to deepen the impact and widen the reach of our work on local, national and international levels.

## OUR VISION

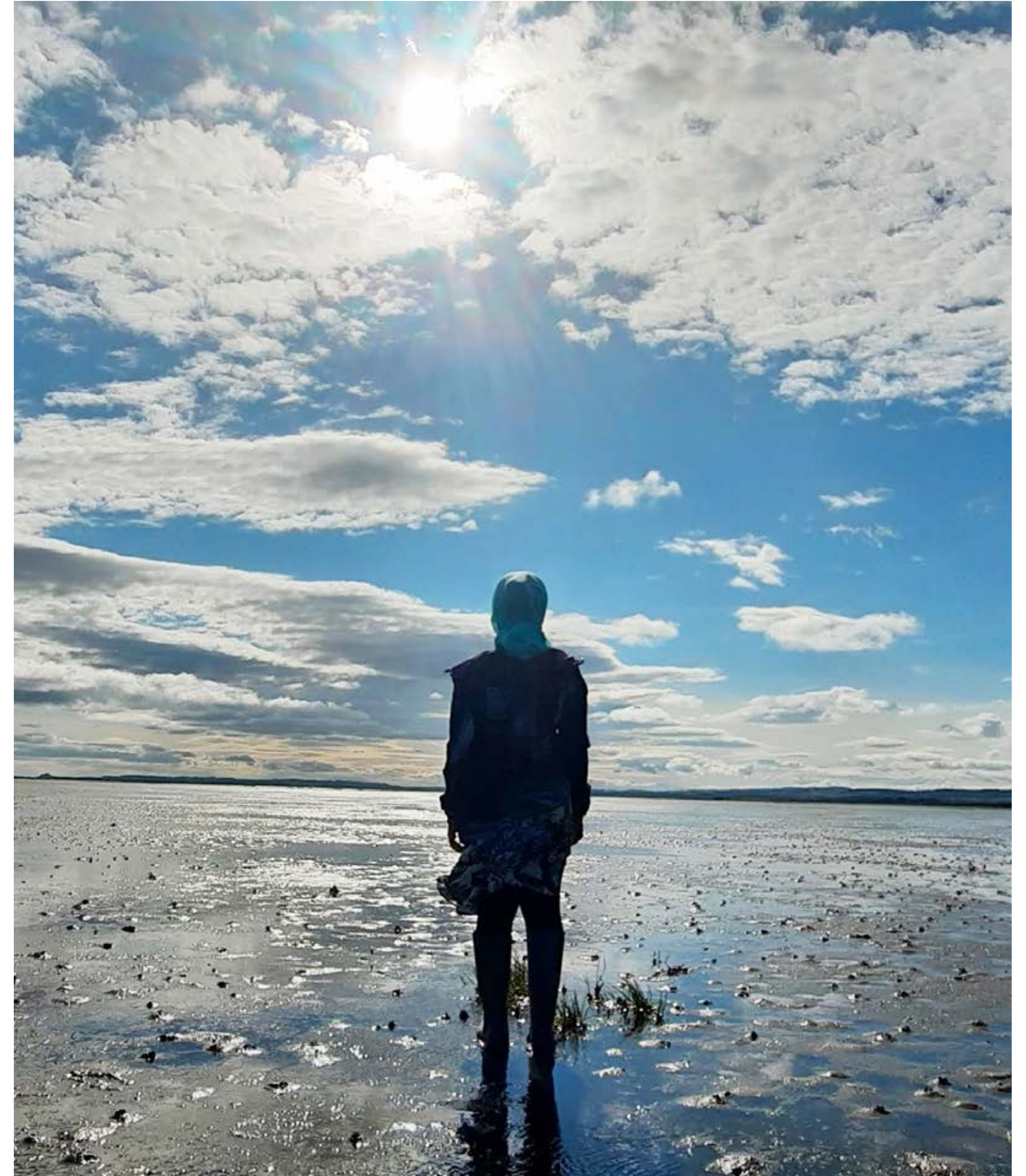
Our vision is of a just and equal society that values and supports artists and communities from displaced and migrant backgrounds.

This would be the society where migration and displacement are no longer understood as historical and social exceptions but rather everyday cultural norms, inscribed in our landscapes, memories, bodies and collective imaginings.

To help bring about this social change we use arts-centred, ambitious and collaborative approaches that mainstream and normalise diverse experiences of displacement and migration in public and digital spaces.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to support and produce the arts by and about migrants and refugees, seeking to ensure that their contributions are recognized and welcomed within our arts, history and culture.



## VALUES AND BELIEFS

We celebrate diversity, openness and collaboration, and our work is based around a set of core values and beliefs which guide our work and decision making:

- We believe that art is much more than an aesthetic experience; that it can open spaces for people to talk across differences, inspire community participation and foster a more humane and compassionate society

Other values guiding our work include:

- Migration is an integral part of our everyday life and as such should be normalised and amplified in all its historic and contemporary richness
- Displacement can be both a traumatic and transformative experience
- Refugees and migrants bring potential to their communities
- Collaborative working improves the impact and quality of our work
- There is civic power in the act of learning together
- First-hand experience of migration & displacement informs all aspects of our work

Our focus on displacement and migration is intersectional and often contains explorations of connected experiences and issues. We are especially committed to expanding our work and collaborations at the intersection of displacement, racial and climate justice and mental health.

We believe there is an inextricable link between these areas of practice. Racial justice is allied with climate and environmental justice and both are in turn dependent on principles and practices of equality and economic justice.

In the wake of the pandemic, mental health and well-being have increasingly become another key aspect of our work.



# STRATEGIC GOALS



To reach our vision we work towards three Strategic Goals defined under the headings of **Enabling, Producing and Learning**. These three goals inform our activities & programmes and are underpinned by a set of principles and methodologies which drive the organisation.

**GOAL 1:**  
**ENABLING ARTISTS AND ORGANISATIONS** to develop their practice, showcase work and expand their networks. Our approach to Enabling includes:

- Provide support (financial, in-kind as well as emotional), professional development, training, fundraising and promotional opportunities for artists primarily from refugee, migrant and other diverse backgrounds
- Provide guidance, resources, access to artist networks and curatorial advice to organisations interested to engage with refugee and migrant experiences
- Build strategic partnerships with and act as a bridge between arts, entertainment, advocacy and other organisations.

LEFT: *Alter*, Paria Moazemi Goodarzi and Francisco Llinas Casas, Refugee Week 2022, Southbank Centre, © Marcia Chandra

**GOAL 2:  
PRODUCING AMBITIOUS WORK IN MAINSTREAM AND  
PUBLIC SPACES** which amplifies marginalised

voices, challenges stereotypes and moves the conversation beyond mere testimony. Our approach to Producing includes:

- Curate, design and deliver projects of different scale and across art forms - ranging from pilot and one-off projects to larger scale events, exhibitions, commissions, digital platforms and residencies
- Commission and co-commission interesting, innovative, challenging and representative work that supports our long-term vision of changing perceptions of migration and displacement
- Work with strategic and mainstream partners - such as museums, heritage, cultural and media institutions - who share our values and aspirations and can help us reach diverse and wide audiences

**GOAL 3:  
CREATING HORIZONTAL LEARNING SPACES AND  
PROGRAMMES** for peer-to-peer learning,

imaginative reflection, cross-sector conversations, skills transfer and the sharing of evaluation and impact. Our aims within this strand are to:

- Embed learning within multiples modes of practice, enabling Counterpoints Arts to be a learning organisation
- Champion quality of process as well as product
- Insist on the value of grounded and collaborative research and of creative arts processes as a legitimate and democratic mode of enquiry

We position cross-disciplinary learning as a core and intrinsic value, enabling the incorporation of new voices, perspectives and cultural mindsets/ experiences into our growing, cross-sector ecosystem.



# ANNUAL PROGRAMME 2023-24

Below is a summary of our planned activities relating to our three Strategic Goals for 2023-24. This programme will be updated annually, via our [Current Activity Plan](#), reflecting our activities each year.

- **Talent development programme:** including mentoring, development commissions, ongoing support, advice and connections for over 60 artists and organisations
- **Refugee Week Festival:** including annual conference, online resources, creative campaign and 1000+ events in the UK and at least 5 other countries including Greece, Malta, Australia, Hong Kong
- **New commissions:** 10 participatory commissions in different locations around England and internationally, engaging with the themes relating to displacement, race, environment and mental health
- **Platforma Festival:** a week-long, multi-location / venue programme in the South West of England
- **New partnerships:** including 10 new collaborative partnerships in the UK plus new international collaborations in Greece, Germany and Ireland
- **Learning Lab programme:** peer-to-peer learning sessions with a variety of partners, summer school for artists in partnership with Create Ireland, Beyond The Now learning partnership with international collaboration
- **Live events:** 12 live events co-developed with partners across different locations in London and England
- **Pop Change programme:** including a series of comedy gigs; high-impact consultations for TV/Film industries and public events / salons





# OUR APPROACH

Our overall approach is about **supporting, curating, producing and commissioning** work and initiatives that bring more diverse representations of the migrant experience to mainstream platforms and public realms.

Underpinning all our work is our commitment to sharing learning and thinking ethically about decisions and behaviour, including being prepared to interrogate complex issues in this context.

## **WORKING ACROSS ART-FORMS, GEOGRAPHIES AND SCALES**

We work across art-forms and genres, and in doing so we collaborate with a wide range of artists, organisations and communities.

Embedded within our mission is our ambition to engage with a wide range of communities and audiences from different settings and contexts. This means that our annual programmes include diverse genres, locations and approaches, ranging from: national festivals and international public art commissions; to hyper-local neighbourhood initiatives; exhibitions in mainstream arts institutions; and collaborations with entertainment industries around mass audience content.

## **ACTING AS BROKERS AND CRITICAL FRIENDS**

A defining aspect of our work is our commitment to developing strategic support systems and networks for artists and organisations working around the issues of displacement and migration. This involves us acting as enablers who provide practical and curatorial support and advice, as well as critical friends, matchmakers, mediators, facilitators, and brokers building networks and meaningful collaborations between cultural practitioners, communities and organisations.

## **CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH POP CULTURE**

As a risk-taking organisation committed to talking to wide and diverse audiences, we are continuously experimenting with new ideas and initiatives. Over the last few years, we have pioneered the PopChange (Pop Culture & Social Change) initiative, which explores how pop culture can be harnessed for social change. As part of this project, we have been developing and supporting an exciting new network of cultural innovators, creators, producers, funders and activists, who are championing new ideas and cross-sector collaborations in this context.

### **WORKING LOCALLY, NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY**

Over the past ten years, we have developed a range of place-based, national and international initiatives and methods of working, which we continue to test, adjust and build on in different contexts. Our plan over the coming period is to deepen and expand our reach by developing focused programmes and public art commissions in selected locations across England, as well as in Greece, Germany and various other international contexts.

### **WORKING COLLABORATIVELY**

Every aspect of our work is delivered in collaboration with a wide-range of local and inter/national partners from grassroots groups, arts and culture, advocacy, educational, digital, media and other fields. This ethos of collaboration reflects our belief that real change will come about through generous cooperation and partnership across sectors, across disciplines and across borders.

Our commitment to collaborative working is intertwined with our ambition to continue

increasing the impact of our work, having more conversations outside the art space and reaching a range of direct and indirect, online and offline audiences.

### **WORKING WITH CARE AND COMPASSION**

Inspired by the practice and approach of many displaced and migrant artists we work with, we strive to be a courageous and risk-taking organisation that is committed to diversity, openness and fairness.

We recognize that background experience and personal histories of the artists and communities we work with, together with social marginalisation and stigma, may contribute to their specific individual needs. It is with this in mind that we cultivate a caring, compassionate and welcoming culture and that we dedicate time and thought to supporting our artists, developing our partnerships and engaging diverse communities and audiences.



# OUR AMBITIONS

## **BUILDING INTER/NATIONAL REPUTATION**

as a leading organisation in the fields of arts, migration and social change. This will include:

- Grow Refugee Week nationally and internationally, establishing it as the largest inter/national festival dedicated to celebrating the creativity and resilience of displaced artists and communities
- Nurture and support community based participatory practice across our networks of organisations, including via the annual Platforma Festivals and Conferences
- Develop inter/national collaborations through commissions, network development, learning and artist development

## **INCREASING THE SCALE AND REACH OF THE WORK**

by reaching new and different direct and indirect audiences in public, pop culture and digital realms, and having more conversations outside traditional arts spaces

- Build new networks and influence content in the pop culture space, with the focus on Film/TV and Comedy
- Develop new participatory commissions focused on areas of high migration and low

arts investment across England

- Develop new international commissions
- Co-programme work with mainstream cultural organisations in London
- Develop participatory arts resources and learning programme for children and young people taking part in Refugee Week
- Build new local and inter/national audiences including from refugee/ migrant and diaspora communities

## **CONTINUE TO ALIGN OURSELVES WITH RACIAL, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

recognising the intersectionality of migrant issues with these wider issues and being ready and able to respond and act when needed

- Develop new partnerships, commissions and programmes around related themes in England and internationally
- Act as an incubator for new organisations and initiatives exploring the relevant intersections
- Bring these subjects to our wider network and audiences





### **CHAMPION DIVERSITY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADERSHIP**

to ensure all the projects we are engaged with, or that we are partners in, involve or are led by those with lived experience of displacement wherever possible and to actively support the development of producers and project managers (as well as artists) from lived experience backgrounds

- Ensure that lived experiences of displacement and migration are embedded within all levels of our organisation and programmes
- Develop specific leadership programmes and pave pathways for careers into the cultural sector
- Influence our partners and wider network through sharing practice, values and aspirations

### **FURTHER INFLUENCING ARTS AND CULTURAL POLICY**

by harnessing the power of popular culture to expand our work and our thinking on social justice into other worlds, including the mainstream

- Run our Learning programmes to develop an ecology of shared learning and artistic development
- Run biennial retreats that bring together practitioners and leaders from across arts, advocacy, entertainment and educational sectors
- Develop resources and shared learning across public sector bodies, including local authorities and NHS

### **INFLUENCING PRACTICE**

as commissioners/producers with a particular approach, way of working and process that is valuable in itself

- Continue to be a leading voice in the field of arts and migration
- Further defining our ways of working, supporting artists, collaborating with partners and valuing both the process and outcomes of the projects we work on
- Share the wider story of our practice and approach

# OUR CHALLENGES

As we move forward to our next stage of work, our aims and objectives remain constant: to change perceptions of displacement and migration and bring about social change. The current social and economic contexts will inevitably bring new challenges. Some of the most pressing identified by artists, partners and team were:

## **POLITICAL**

how to remain strong and resilient in an increasingly nationalistic, racist and hostile environment in the UK post-Brexit, including offering artists the very basic support they might need to survive this political climate, as well as supporting them to make creative work

## **ARTISTIC**

how to create exciting new work and spaces (including in the digital sphere) while ensuring access for more vulnerable communities and continuing to be able to generate the non-hierarchical and open spaces

## **ORGANISATIONAL**

how to continue to raise funds and maintain integrity in a difficult economic context, while expanding programme and mainstreaming the work through partnerships nationally and internationally



# PATHWAY TO CHANGE

## OUR AIMS

- **Enable artists and organisations** to develop their practice, showcase work and expand their networks
- **Produce ambitious work in mainstream and public spaces** which amplifies marginalised voices, challenges stereotypes and move the conversation beyond mere testimony
- **Create horizontal learning programmes** designed as spaces for peer-to-peer learning, imaginative reflection, cross-sector conversations and the sharing of evaluation and impact

## MISSION

- **Change perceptions of displacement and migration through arts-centred approaches**, valuing, normalising and mainstreaming the experience of displaced artists and communities

## OUR ACTIVITIES

- **Curating, producing and commissioning** work across art forms and genres
- **Talent development and mentoring programme for artists**, including ongoing support, advice and connections
- **Developing Partnerships and networks** including leading on the production of the national Refugee Week festival and Platforma networks
- **Learning** a reflective layer that enables us to do the difficult thinking around the work
- **Pop culture and social change** harnessing TV/film and comedy to shift the way we talk about displacement and migration
- **Neighbourhood programming** engaging local communities around participatory work

## OUR AUDIENCES

- **Indirect:** artists, organisations and communities engaging with experiences of displacement and migration
- **Direct:** arts and (pop) culture audiences; existing supported (active/passive); children and young people; opinion formers

Both of these types of audience will be engaged strategically to reach 'fence sitters'

## OUR APPROACH

**Working across art-forms, geographies and scales** in order to engage communities and audiences from different settings and contexts

- **Acting as brokers and critical friends**, providing practical and curatorial support and advice, building networks and collaborations between communities and sectors
- **Working locally, nationally and internationally** to deepen and expand our reach
- **Working collaboratively** through generous cooperation across sectors, disciplines and borders
- **Working with care and compassion**, dedicating time and thought to supporting artists, developing partnerships and engaging diverse audiences
- **Creating social change through pop culture**, supporting content development for mass audiences and developing a network of cultural innovators working in this context

## OUR AMBITIONS

- **Building inter/national reputation** as a leading organisation in the fields of arts, migration and social change
- **Increasing the scale and reach of the work** by reaching new and different direct and indirect audiences in public, pop culture and digital realms
- **Continue to align with racial, climate justice and mental health issues** recognising the intersectionality of the migrant experience
- **Champion diversity and 'lived experience' leadership**, ensuring that all the projects we work on meaningfully involve those with lived experience of displacement
- **Influencing arts & cultural policy and practice** as commissioners and producers with a particular approach and methodology

# APPENDIX 1: ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Our Organisational Objectives for the coming period consist of a number of plans:

## EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Our plan over the coming period is to deepen our understanding of public, partner and internal perceptions through surveys and consultation. We will use this to inform our ongoing planning and delivery and carry out a 360° evaluation of outcomes across our work as defined under our Strategic Goals and share this externally with our networks. We believe our evaluation can only be successful when following this ongoing cyclical process. We aim to:

- Deepen our understanding of public, partner and internal perceptions through surveys and consultation.
- Embed evaluation tools and findings across the 3 strands of our work
- Share learning with our networks

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our commitment to environmental responsibility will include increasing our in-house training on environmental impact reporting for all staff and trustees. We plan to recruit a trustee to provide oversight at Board-level of organisational strategy and outcomes surrounding our environmental responsibilities. We also plan to embed our understanding of environmental responsibility as much as possible in our projects and commissioning process and share effective approaches across our networks. This will include:

- In-house training on environmental impact reporting for all staff and trustees
- Recruit a trustee to provide board-level oversight of organisational strategy and outcomes surrounding environmental responsibility

- Embed understanding of environmental responsibility through commissions, training and sharing of effective approaches across networks.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & CULTURE

Our team structure comprises of a Senior Management Team, including the Director and Operations Manager, who work together collaboratively to ensure the development of exciting artists programmes and the continual strengthening of our operational processes.

We conduct a skills audit and review of internal processes on an ongoing basis, analysing our systems & processes, working culture and external environment and this review takes the form of our annual Away Day, regular team trips and more informal day-to-day conversation. In addition, quarterly Board meetings provide crucial feedback from our Trustees on any changes needed to organisational structure and culture. Combined, these measures ensure that we are continually nourishing an organisational culture which helps us best respond to the needs of our artists.

A recent survey showed that our team members were highly positive about our organisational culture, describing it as: flexible, collaborative, supportive, and based on trust and shared learning. We will continue to foster our strong organisation structure & culture via:

- Annual training for our team, trustees and wider network around the issues of strategic planning, mental health awareness, social economic exclusion, and disability.
- Development of advisory Boards for organisations and specific projects, i.e., PopChange; Refugee Week
- Review of our work with our new board & co-chairs and consider any changes to organisational structures and culture.
- Responding appropriately to external changes & further

diversify our funding.

- Collaborative capacity building in areas of low arts investment & high refugee populations
- Partnership building in the selected locations, ensuring that programmes are based around local needs for access to creative resources

## TEAM, BOARD AND ADVISORS

Our team of highly skilled and dedicated staff, trustees and advisors is the most important resource at our disposal. In developing our team and boards, we are committed to ensuring that we have a diverse range of skills, backgrounds and lived experiences, starting with those of displacement and migration, on all levels of our organisation. Diversity of skills, perspectives and lived experiences is an essential aspect of our commitment to supporting and producing relevant and exciting work in our field.

In order to ensure that the team thrives and that our organisational culture encourages collaboration, generosity and mutual support, we are committed to supporting the professional development of our staff, advisors, trustees and freelancers. This includes supporting team personal development through appropriate support, training and mentoring opportunities, as well as supporting their wider interests and ambitions.

## FINANCIAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT

The financial aspect of our activities is overseen by at least 2 staff members, tracked through charity management accounts and monitored on a continual basis by our team and monthly with our dedicated accountant. The year end accounts are examined annually by a chartered external auditing company.

We maintain an organisational Risk Register which is reviewed twice a year at Board level and which provides a clear framework and strategy for identification, assessment and ongoing management of all types of risk pertaining to our work. The details of this Risk Register feed into our annual report.

## POLICY

Our organisational policy is reviewed in line with any changes, including updates prompted by external factors and relevant regulatory changes, and we ensure that policy is updated in consultation with the team and Board of Trustees as appropriate.

Following a formal policy review schedule, we actively communicate our policy with staff and our wider partners where needed, and we encourage staff to understand and provide feedback on our policies in the context of our work.



# APPENDIX 2: NEEDS ANALYSES

Some of the recent research and analysis, by ourselves and others, that has informed our business plan includes:

## STRATEGIC EVALUATION AND PLANNING

[Let's Create](#) - the new 10 Year Strategy from Arts Council England, starting with the three outcomes identified as underpinning all our work, as demonstrated throughout this business plan:

- Creative People: Everyone can be creative, and each of us has the potential to develop our creativity further;
- Cultural Communities: Culture and the experiences it offers can have a deep and lasting effect on places and the people who live in them;
- A Creative & Cultural Country: The Art sector is innovative, collaborative & international.

[Our Story and Vision](#) - in 2020 we commissioned an independent narrative-based evaluation of our work and practice, based on audience and production data and interviews with staff, stakeholders and participants. This has enabled us to update our theory of change, articulate our methodology and consider challenges and ambitions for the coming years.

[2020 Refugee Week evaluation](#) - with key learning points from case studies featuring how we and our partners adapted to move work online during the pandemic. In consultation with our partners, advisors and broader network, we have also developed a new Refugee Week Theory of Change, that will inform our work on this project over the next 4 years.

## RACIAL JUSTICE

["It's more than just black people on the stage: the barriers to and opportunities for meaningful collaboration across the arts, migration and racial justice sectors"](#) (2021) - research report commissioned by CA from Selina Nwulu, based on 19 interviews and exploring how these sectors navigate barriers and institutional power dynamics.

[The Stuart Hall Foundation Race Report \(2021\)](#) - a new review, written by Stephen D. Ashe, summarising the findings of the numerous inquiries that have looked at racial inequalities across British society in the past 40 years.

[Lived Experience Leadership Report \(2020\)](#) - recommendations from the Lived Experience Movement

## POP CULTURE

[New Brave World: The power, opportunities and potential of pop culture for social change in the UK'](#) – by Alice Sachrajda and Marzena Zukowska (2021). Counterpoints Arts' PopChange initiative is one of the changemakers highlighted in the report, along with many of our partners and allies, including a case study of our No Direction Home stand-up comedy project and emerging work in gaming.

[Shifting The Narrative](#) - six case studies from the Opportunity Agenda (US, 2021)



## SURVEYS AND CONSULTATIONS WITH OUR NETWORK, INCLUDING RELATING TO COVID-19

We have ongoing consultation with our network and beyond through partner surveys (e.g. for Refugee Week), Learning Labs (reflecting on aspects of practice, including our own) and audience surveys (through Audience Finder). In addition, in 2020 we conducted a survey of artists regarding their experience at the early stages of the pandemic to help inform our response.

We have also partnered in a new project 'Beyond The Now' with writers, artists and other practitioners commissioned to consider social art practice for a post-pandemic world.

## OTHER REPORTS

[Arts and Uncertainty: Designing Creative Interventions in Times of Crisis](#) (2021) - A toolkit from Ettijahat – Independent Culture

[Taking Stock and Facing the Future - The infrastructure and resources of the UK migration and refugee sector](#) Key findings include: Over 90% of funder and CEO interviewees either agreed or agreed strongly with the proposition that "the sector must pool its collective resources more if it is going to achieve significant policy changes."

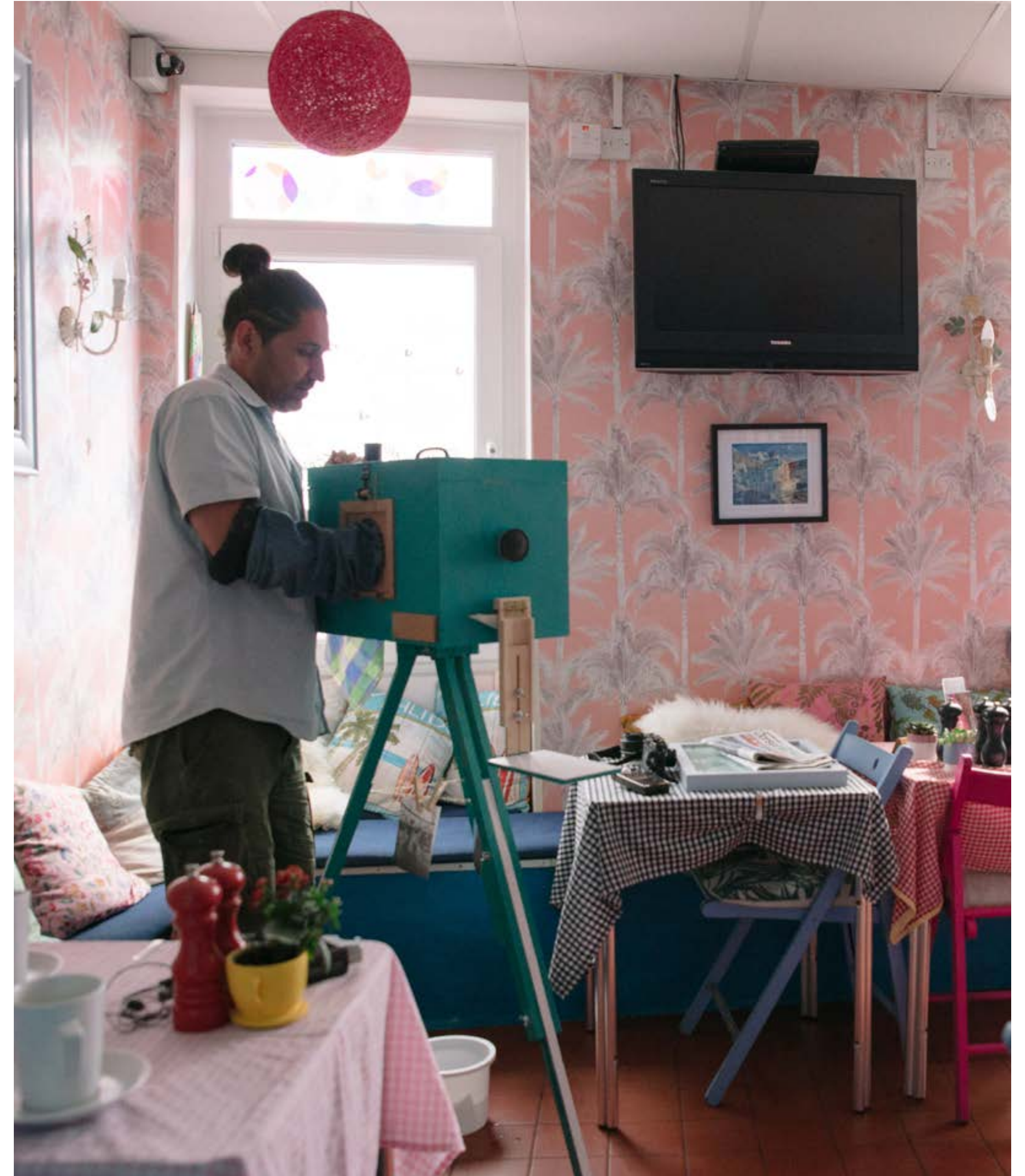
[Social Connection in the Covid-19 Crisis](#) - highlighting issues of digital exclusion

[Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events?](#)

[Putting a price on Carbon - Julie's Bicycle](#)

[The current assessment from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)

[Changing our narrative about narrative - the infrastructure required for building narrative power](#) - Rashad Robinson





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