

# How many eggs does it take to make an omelette?



THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM COOKBOOK

Edited by Janine Armin and Denise Bowler



Before you read on, it is useful to provide an explanation of, or invitation to why this cookbook exists and ways in which to use it.

This book builds upon the work previously presented in The Constituent Museum, published by Valiz in 2018, which explores what would happen if museums put relationships at the centre of their operations.

As part of The Constituent Museum Project, Olle Lundin, Constituent Curator at the Van Abbemuseum and Denise Bowler, Constituent Museum Curator at the Whitworth, wanted to find a format to share ways that they had tried out or discovered while working with constituents.

Through conversation, we arrived at a cookbook, where ingredients represented the people, relationships and approaches used. Food is always present in social situations making for an informal, relaxed and generous atmosphere. People share conversation while eating. The focus is not solely on the dialogue.

This cookbook operates on two levels: it is a cookbook with recipes and it is a cookbook offering recipes for possible ways of working with people. As with all recipes, there is room for personal shifts in the raw ingredients, timings and equipment.

A range of voices have been represented... not all of our partners have been included and we continue to work with new constituents.

There is a suggested order to the book, but you can dip in and out of it. The design facilitates your navigation of the sections. You can choose what you want to read first. Alternatively, you can start using the recipes.



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# A peaceful tool fuelled by a basic human need.

## FOREWORD

Candida Gertler OBE  
Co-Founder, Co-Director, and Trustee  
Outset Contemporary Art Fund

Over the centuries, the challenge of defining what constitutes 'art' has kept many philosophers and their students very busy. When first learning about Arte Útil through the joint application by the Whitworth in Manchester, UK, and the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, for the Outset Partners transformative grant in 2018, I was wondering if this was another attempt. I remember a sudden thought crossing my mind: but isn't all art useful? Simply because it is the beginning of a human reaching out. From cave paintings to the most radical conceptual presentation – art is the purest form of the simple cry: 'See me! Hear me! Engage with me! And please don't forget me!' and if it can also achieve meaningful communal effect and impact beyond serving human expression – even better! Arte Útil is a wonderful clarification concentrating on revealing this very desire within human nature – inherent to all – just taking it a significant step further, offering a peaceful, useful tool fuelled by this basic need. So Arte Útil is not another attempt to define art, but a way to remember and confront its importance and power within society.

In Outset Partner's very first round of affording a significant grant (£150,000) to a truly transformative project, the Whitworth and the Van Abbemuseum's ambitious path towards a constituent-led museum felt like a revelation. I remember the vivid, effervescent conversations and questions, and the feeling of starting to dream together of what could be... culminating in the project The Constituent Museum: Collecting Relations and the Transformational Potential of Arte Útil (2018 – present). It was seen as a most welcome, radical offer and has given us all already the most rewarding experiences. On behalf of all Outset Partners I am wishing the cookbook project enormous success in sharing the Whitworth and Van Abbemuseum's recipes for making a constituent-led museum!

# INTRODUCTION

*Why is this a  
cookbook when  
you can't eat food  
in a gallery?*

THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM PROJECT  
Denise Bowler

ARTE ÚTIL AND THE ART OF COOKERY  
Alistair Hudson

THE RISE OF THE  
CONSTITUENT MUSEUM  
Stella Toonen

A PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS  
THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM  
Charles Esche

## THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM PROJECT

Denise Bowler  
Constituent Museum Curator  
—  
the Whitworth

The Constituent Museum Project – such a grand, definitive and intriguing title.

What does it mean? Who is or can be part of this project? Is it a project? Is it a new type of museum? Sounds quite daunting in some respects and yet inspires so many questions...

It is a jointly funded partnership project through Outset Partners – a group of people who raise money to support innovative contemporary art and strive to connect that art with the widest possible audiences across nine countries, including the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Israel, India, the Netherlands, Greece, Estonia and Scotland.

To fulfil this intention, the Constituent Museum wants to be one of the most grounded, open and transparent structures for working museums. It hopes to reflect its constituency and encourage local agency. It asks questions of the structure and role of museums and its relevance to its community.

Responsibility to its immediate environment is explained by Charles Esche in 'A Personal Journey Towards the Constituent Museum'.

The museum needed to take its responsibility to its immediate environment more seriously and work consistently with the participants (later constituents) who were most obviously close at hand.

This is an opportunity to rethink the art institution of the future; one with an increased relevance to the lives of others where art galleries can make change happen; a future where constituents beyond gallery staff shape the institution to suit their needs; one with a programme of exhibitions to tell their stories and make art work socially.

This cookbook gathers together personal stories and honest discoveries from many investigations and experiments over a period of 18 months. The assembled ingredients for life can be used to cook up similar projects, seasoning existing ideals or adding spice to your comfort food. Nourishment is essential to a healthy diet – nourishment that promotes creativity, a sense of belonging and place, as well as agency in the gallery and local community.

Both directors from the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands and the Whitworth in Manchester, UK, have worked closely on previous projects including the Arte Útil Archive, an online platform for sharing socially engaged practice, and

L'Internationale, which is a network of European museums and galleries that champions the Constituent Museum. The two museums share some similarities: both have an art collection and are based in post-industrial cities.

Outset funds have enabled the hiring of part-time curators in each respective museum plus additional money for joint ventures and an institution-specific programme over the course of a year (2019-20). The curator mediates between the institution and the constituents by convening meetings, workshops and public discussions, building up trust with the constituencies. The general project aim is to redraw relationships with local constituency groups, creating agency for them to inform museums' approaches to collecting, curating and presenting and allowing for them to ask questions about to what extent they can transform a museum. The original intention of a year-long exploration was extended to over two years at the Whitworth due to the change in circumstance arising from Covid-19 slowing down the process of setting up new relationships.

Like most best-laid plans, there is always something that necessitates a review of intent, time or budget. During the Constituent Museum project the global pandemic hit, which affected everyone. Time became elastic with the want to extend the duration of the project, giving further time to reflect on how this way of working impacts the museum and to acknowledge the benefits of allocating more time to developing sustainable relationships. This is one of the shifts within the gallery: the desire to 'collect' more relationships with a greater breadth of people, including our local neighbours. Covid meant we were unable to meet people and it made it impossible to set up new relationships when only Zoom meetings were possible with existing contacts.

I invite you to read on, to try a few of the recipes, to add your own ingredients and to create a feast! In other words, you can take elements, fragments, ideas from some of the case studies to try out with the groups that you work with or you can cook 'Sue's Sausage Surprise' to eat together while sharing a conversation about what matters to you. We opted for a book of recipes because food is a good way for people to come together and those social situations with food often generate relaxing conversation, which a great time to get to know one another. Ingredients can be taken literally for a recipe that you cook or alternatively, they can be the factors or values that you think are essential to making a constituent-led relationship thrive.

# Using art as a way to solve problems.

# Art helps us to see problems differently.

## COOKBOOK VOCABULARY AND ACRONYMS

Words and their meanings are fluid and depend on the time and context of their use. Our intention for the words below is to clarify our interpretation within the cookbook context, where the context is the curators shared understanding of the words at the time that the cookbook was written and aims to make sense in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

### ACRONYMS

AU	Arte Útil
CMP	Constituent Museum Project
FOW	Friends of the Whitworth
MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
OPR	Oakland Projects Revisited
VAM	Van Abbemuseum
WYC	Whitworth Young Contemporaries
WZW	Wie Zijn Wij?

### COMMUNITY

“Community” is a notoriously fuzzy concept with a multitude of meanings.<sup>[1]</sup> It is in the sense of place-based communities, that we approach the term: local communities within a two-mile radius of the museum. It is important to remember that we may have one understanding of the meaning of ‘community’ whereas those that live in the community may have a different interpretation. Being part of a community involves social interaction with its members to work effectively. What level of social interaction counts as a community? Acknowledging residents, helping one another out, meeting regularly or attending community events. For the CMP, these activities would take place in the museum.

### CONSTITUENT

This term might be most familiar as a description of a member of a political party or group. Within the museum context – and as part of my job title – I take it to mean an individual from the community, an individual neighbour, and a representative from the local neighbourhood and is used to describe partnership work with hyperlocal

communities. Constituent-led practice implies a role that is more than participatory and in which constituents have agency to shape, change, determine, select, advise, and shift focus and power in active relationship with the museum. The power is less top down and more democratic. This loaded word that raises questions and invites discussion has proved a useful tool to engage with collaborators, co-developers, and co-designers in order to re-examine the relationship between the museum and its constituents.

#### HYPERLOCAL

On Dictionary.com hyperlocal means relating to or focusing on matters concerning a small community or geographical area. The CMP builds on this definition when choosing specific areas or communities very close to the gallery that may want to connect with us.

#### INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a term that was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw thirty years ago in her paper 'Demarginalising the intersection of Race and Sex' delivered at the University of Chicago Legal Forum. In it, Crenshaw refers to three legal cases dealing with racism and sexism where intersectionality explains the compounded nature and complexity of multiple discriminations. She writes: 'Intersectionality was a prism to bring to light dynamics within discrimination law that weren't being appreciated by the courts.'

The framework for understanding how a person's social and political identities combine to create different forms of discrimination and privilege made it into the Oxford English Dictionary in 2015 as a sociological term meaning: 'The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.' Further, Adia Harvey Wingfield is quoted in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition for having written: '[Kimberlé] Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality, the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.' [2]

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD

Your Dictionary states that it is the area surrounding a particular place, person, or object. In this context, we use neighbourhood to mean the area around each specific museum.

#### POLYPHONY

##### *noun*

Music: polyphonic composition; counterpoint

Phonetics: representation of different sounds by the same letter or symbol

My understanding of the word for the CMP is based on hearing from and valuing multiple voices or perspectives. Moving away from one hierarchical voice to talk about, understand, and engage with art.

#### UPWORDING

Evolution of thinking through everyday language. As much of the way we speak is habitual, the practice of upwording starts with raising awareness of the underpinning concepts, intentions, and positions taken, implied in habitual words and phrases, and from there to make active language choices to align language with intentions. Words change worlds: yours mine ours.

1 — Kobena Mercer, 'Imagine all the people', in Nikos Papastergiadis (ed.), *Annotations 1: Mixed Belongings and Unspecified Destinations* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts) quoted in Maria Hudson, Joan Phillips, Kathryn Ray and Helen Barnes, *Social cohesion in diverse communities* (York, UK: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007).

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/2036-social-cohesion-communities.pdf>

2 — Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw quoted in Jane Coaston, 'The Intersectionality Wars', Vox, 28 May 2019.

<https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>

At the heart of the idea of the Constituent Museum is a reconstitution of the idea of art. The art museum in general, as we have inherited it, is a social and cultural entity that was created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, bound up in the processes of industrialisation, modernisation, and democratisation of the Western World. This is a world of art that was created around the idea of autonomy, art as a set of things working on a higher plane, distilled out from usual life and into a realm of the unusual and to be viewed in the exceptional circumstances of the art gallery.

In this particular world, art is given its meaning and value by those who have power and control – the wealthy, the influential, academia, connoisseurs, and so on – essentially those who have the authority to say what is art and what is not. What you might say is a quite a tight loop of consensus. There have of course been many valiant (and not so valiant) attempts to re-integrate art back into society and the every-day, to go beyond the conventions of conservative art and branch out rebelliously into performance, politics, film, concepts, architecture, food, even urinals, but ultimately the machinery of the museum and market has always re-captured these tear-aways back into the logic of the isolation chamber and the order of established power. After all anything can be art, with permission.

With this kind of system of control, there will always be a certain degree of gate-keeping, even with the best intentions to share and open up to all; you need certain kinds of knowledge, certain kinds of behaviour, certain codes engrained, and a certain confidence.

So, in trying to evolve a new kind of museum that genuinely reconnects art with the most people and the most cultures it has been vital to look at other forms of art and other ways that art has worked historically, throughout the whole of human history, not just in the last 200 years in the top left-hand corner of Eurasia. What would look like a more open loop of consensus.

The current art museum culture is rooted in an agreement that there are things that are art and things that are not art. This simple division works well for the art market, to give them certain financial value and works for galleries in that it gives them certain cultural value, or even prestige value. But what about use value? This is the question that has been posed in the recent work of Arte Útil (art as a tool), a kind of movement initiated by the artist Tania Bruguera around 2013, that draws upon this undercurrent of thinking that has been somewhat absent from mainstream art debates until quite

recently. Arte Útil challenges us to think of art as a tool or a process we apply across all areas of life, not just a subset of objects designated as such by someone higher up the chain.

In this way, we might ask a different question, other than the usual ‘is this art?’ and think instead ‘how much art do we have here?’. In asking instead to what degree can something be art or art-like (or more technically its ‘coefficient of art’), we are able to open up a more complex and accurate understanding of the way art works in the world at large, when it is mixed up in the push and pull of things. And in turn we might unlock our museums in a similar way, with new understandings of what and who they are for. It’s a way to connect us with a broader understanding of creativity and its function in society, drawing lines between different viewpoints and cultures. For most of human history art was embedded in all forms of living, through ritual, craft, architecture, religion, etc. While many may hold on dearly to art as a specific category or status of object \* (which they can quite happily be free to continue to do), it is equally common language to talk of art in different ways: of the art of gardening, cookery, politics, or even warfare. This more everyday usage, of art as a process or application of care and consideration, begins to make more sense when we think of art in terms of degree, not just its final form. What kind of artistic competencies can we apply to the workings of the world out there? \*\*

The ever-growing online Arte Útil archive, recently acquired for the collections of the Van Abbemuseum and the Whitworth provides an index to hundreds of projects around the world that demonstrate a variety of approaches in this vein, of applying art as a process or strategy to make a change in the world, large or small, and have their meaning created through how they are used by people, not presented as a given, served up on a plate.

Some case studies work in the field of politics, some in urban development, or economics. A significant number use the culture and mechanisms of food production and consumption as a vehicle for bigger ideas with social efficacy. It is almost cliché how the culture of the table acts as a conduit and convener of cultural exchange, the universal art form. Even in recent times, the international hipsterisation of food as way of life is arguably a natural consequence of its central role in our global culture. It is at the same time a basic daily essential and also a visible, tangible, edible battle ground of economics, politics, culture, aesthetics, power, ethics, and environment. It is a form of creative production that is fundamentally embedded in the way we live. With this in mind, the ‘Coefficient of Art’ is played out very clearly in the arena of the kitchen – we all have to eat, but how do we eat, how much artistry or love do we employ in that process and in doing so, what else do we bring to the table?

\* NB for critics of Arte Útil, this is not about replacing existing ‘non-art’ societal functions with art, for example, an artist having a go at being doctor or city planner, but challenging and enhancing conventions by the application of creative competence or tactics, for example, the city planner’s practice adapting to become more artistic, in the broadest sense.

\*\* We might describe these things as ones with a high coefficient of art.



### Arte Útil Archive

The Arte Útil Archive is now part of the Whitworth collection. Paving the expanding network of ideas, processes and relationships at the heart of the institution signs our commitment to the Arte Útil ethos. It is a catalyst to change how we work and to inspire new projects within the communities around us.

The map shows the location of selected Arte Útil projects that have been initiated around the world. The shelves house a growing selection of case studies and reports that demonstrate how to build the archive, and exploring themes within it. The cabinet displaying ongoing Arte Útil project processes.

The current display connects to our exhibition Suzanne Lacy: What Kind of City? A manual for change. On the shelves we present Arte Útil case studies and report with new ways to live together, initiated and maintained by collaborators working in art, design, architecture, civic planning, community organising and more.

Merely in the cabinet, we show the evolution of Old and Projects Revisited, an exhibition programme with youth in Manchester developing throughout the exhibition and beyond. Inspired by The Children's Project (2001) by Suzanne Lacy, young people speak out about their experience living in Manchester and their hopes and dreams for the future, building their agency to make change.



In 2018 our two museums launched the project the Constituent Museum and the Transformative Power of Arte Útil, within the grandeur of the Royal Academy, and in celebration of a receiving a grant from Outset Partners. Naturally a reception ensued with food and drink, essentially we chose our suppliers from four socially driven food projects featured in the Arte Útil archive.

The bread was supplied by Homebaked, a co-operative bakery across the road from Liverpool Football Club's stadium in Anfield. The bakery was set up in 2010 as an alternative solution to the housing clearance policies of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative that was disempowering the neighbourhood, with compulsory purchase orders breaking up deep-rooted communities.

The project was initiated by the artist Jeanne van Heeswijk, following an invitation from the Liverpool Biennial. The artist first wanted to work with the young people of Anfield, to take matters into their own hands, and build custom-made houses and regain control of a run-away house-building programme that favoured the market rather than the residents. As it turned out, the challenge of securing any housing stock in this climate was too great at this time and Jeanne switched tactics to lease the old, closed down corner bakery, to spearhead a new strategy. Bringing back to life a much loved local asset, became a force that brought people together, galvanising a community effort to build a social enterprise that offered training, jobs, and excellent pies for thousands every match day. In this sense the bakery became a kind of Trojan Horse, infecting the streets around it with a ground-up spirit and the power to enact change. Today the Homebaked Community Land Trust is creating a community-owned system for social housing, cooperative retail, and common spaces in the Anfield area.

The cheese served at the Royal Academy was supplied through INLAND, an arts collective based in Asturias, Northern Spain, initiated by the artist Fernando García-Dory. It is dedicated to agricultural, social, and cultural forms of production that confront the problems of our global system – a system that is now collapsing at environmental, cultural, and financial levels.

INLAND provides the tools and ideas for communities to regain control of their environment and economy locally, but from the perspective of the rural and ecological mindset of the 'periphery', outside the world's bustling metropolitan centres. Amongst its many activities, the organisation runs schools in shepherding, peasantry, crafts, and self-reliance, which in turn fire the ground up regeneration of declining rural villages in a way that is internationally networked. Their very excellent hard cheese, similar to Manchego, is produced through their training programmes. On the night in question this was served with pickles from Culture Shop an initiative set up by Grizedale Arts. Also realised in its mobile form under the name House of Ferment, this international and super local project demonstrates how to produce and use low-cost, low-impact and healthy fermented food products, which in turn provides a vehicle for exchange of ideas and cultures between different communities around the world – encouraging

the growth of knowledge through exchange. Often conversations over unique pickling knowledge cultivate a climate for bigger conversations and projects about the use of our productive and creative faculties to take on questions of planning, agriculture, environment, and economics. To demonstrate this feed-forward methodology, Grizedale Arts recently acquired a local pub, the Farmers Arms, with the local community in order to develop these processes of cultural exchange on a much larger scale – as well as it being just a pub, it is a pub done really well.

The breads, cheeses, and pickles were accompanied with beer and soda produced by Company Drinks, a community space and social enterprise based in Barking and Dagenham. Here they make drinks with and for each other, as a form of social glue and a way to encourage connections amongst the diverse communities of East London. It was initiated by artist Kathrin Böhm in 2014 to bring people back together through the act of picking, foraging, and gleaning (which they used to do in earlier generations) to make naturally sourced drinks, while also enabling an urban population to reconnect with its local green spaces and nearby countryside.

Company Drinks is now a co-working space in the old bowling green pavilion in the park and an expanding network of users, collaborators, and partners come together to pick, grow, make, learn, unlock, and share the resources and knowledge around us, not just in bottled form.

All of these projects demonstrate alternative ways of living through a common language and the convening power of food, perhaps the oldest form of artistry. In this they collaborate with and champion the ideas of those around us, encourage each other to re-imagine new ways of working and existing together, with a good portion of care and consideration.

These kinds of activity are both art projects and the things themselves at the same time, simultaneously art and not art, moving between those positions depending on how we see them and consume them. You don't need a degree in art history to understand them and each meaning is generated through their use in real time and space, integrated into usual life – like all good food.

In a purposefully pointed way we served this produce on a table in front of the Royal Academy's copy of Leonardo's Last Supper, quite unashamedly translating the art of food from mere representation (in the painted image) to actual operation, in the world around us and in the present – and most importantly presenting this work not as individual expression, but communal contribution.



The Office of Arte Útil, the Whitworth

Photography Michael Pollard

# THE RISE OF THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM

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When in March 2020 museums across Europe closed their doors due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the needs of their audiences changed overnight. Instead of physical exhibitions, they suddenly desired digital and remote programmes, and museums had no choice but to meet that demand. A few months later, the worldwide Black Lives Matter protests solidified calls from the public for museums to take action supporting equality and diversity – needs that had always existed, but their urgency had now become undeniable. After 2020, it might be fair to say that museums no longer have sole authority over their future, but instead, in order to remain relevant, they have to actively listen to what their audiences demand.

Indeed, many museums have used the downtime during 2020 lockdowns to start building closer relationships with their audience communities, and some have undergone more structural change to prioritise the needs of these groups. However, the desire to let audiences and communities play a bigger role in museums is not new at all.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY-LED MUSEUMS

Already in the 1960s it was artists that started inviting museum visitors to become part of their artworks, [3] and in the 1980s 'New Museology' scholars talked about placing audiences and their visitor experience more at the centre of how museums were structured and run. [4] In 2006 scholars spoke of a 'participatory turn,' [5] which indicated that artists and museums were building deeper relationships with communities, acknowledging a rise in socially engaged approaches to art.

Around 2010 two important new concepts took the idea of community collaboration much further and popularised it among museums across the world. One was museum director Nina Simon's idea of the 'participatory museum', which laid out museums' community engagement approaches along a spectrum, going from simple participatory arts projects to museums sharing actual decision-making power with their communities, sometimes even leading to a full-blown hand-over of power and the museum becoming entirely community-led. Her model established the idea that museums might be places that could be co-created together with audiences, communities, and other constituents. The other development was artist Tania Bruguera's launch of the concept of 'Arte Útil' or 'useful art', which sees art as a tool for social change and museums as a place to support and serve its visitors or 'users'. This idea of 'usership' sees the museum as an institution that can contribute social value by producing or amplifying the change that its users desire. [6] It actively goes against traditional notions of passive spectatorship, expert culture, and ownership, which had shaped museums up until then. Over the

last decade, the idea of opening up museums to work with audience communities and support their needs has become an important topic in museums' discussions across Europe, and terms such as community-led working, cultural democracy, civic role, co-creation, and co-production have become standard museum jargon. These ideas also supported a parallel development towards diversifying museums and increasing the range of voices that their collections and exhibitions represent. By making their institutions more open and putting people – rather than objects – at their centre, many museums found new relevance and met the expectations of their users more successfully (as outlined later on).

## THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM APPROACH

The concept of the Constituent Museum builds on this movement towards more user-centred approaches. It borrows most heavily from the Arte Útil language and framework, but applies its social change philosophy to museums as institutions, rather than seeing it as originating from artists. In a way, it replaces the idea of 'useful art' with a model for a 'useful museum'.

Indeed, a constituent museum is often described as a model for a museum that is shaped by the use value that people have of it. These people, who are the museum's constituents, might include individuals, groups, networks, and neighbourhoods, local or further afield, and the museum's staff community. As a result, the museum is part of the social ecosystem in which it is embedded, and has a civic role in supporting and developing its constituency by serving the needs of its members.

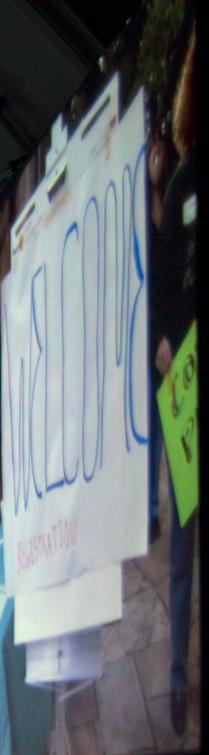
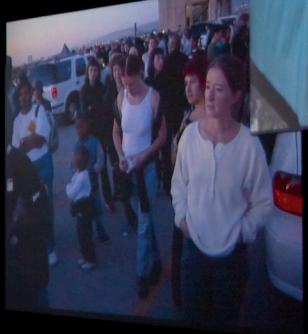
While the Constituent Museum language is mainly championed by the Whitworth (UK) and Van Abbemuseum (Netherlands), many other museums across Europe are committed to similar ideas around producing social purpose and delivering social change together with their constituents. L'Internationale European museum confederation, of which the Van Abbemuseum is a member, published an extensive reader on the Constituent Museum. For instance, the long-term work of Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona with the social movements in Barcelona in such projects as Desacuerdos from 2002-05; the current work with the communities around Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid; and the collaboration between the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art and the Anti-Fascist Year in Poland are all important examples of different kinds of constituent approach, often describing themselves as constituent museums or equivalents in their languages.

For instance, Derby Museums (UK) uses the term 'human-centred design' to explain how they achieve social change. They have set up the Museum of Making, which offers a space for constituents to meet creative needs and to develop new skills, and which was entirely co-designed and co-produced with local users. Other museums position their social change approach around themes of decolonisation, by including more diverse voices in their displays and challenging the remnants of historical power structures. Many of them use 'co-curation' techniques to produce exhibitions together with constituents

## Code 33: Emergency, Clear the Air, 1997-99

"Fortunately, there is always a necessary inrush of efficiency. It seems to exceed the time adults take to live. This is not to say that progress is dangerous and that same progress is the provider for proper action."

Henry Gross



Installation shot of the Oakland Projects (1991-2001)  
Suzanne Lacy – *What kind of city?* (2021)

Photography Michael Pollard

that include their voices, or work with their constituents in previous colonial territories to return objects to their original owners, like the National Museum for World Cultures in Amsterdam. Some museums might approach social change by building partnerships with other civic organisations, which has for instance brought together the university galleries in Manchester to set up a consortium that supports local healthcare and social prescription services. While there are significant differences, especially between the European and US/UK approach, these are only a few examples of the many different ways in which a constituent museum ideology might manifest itself in art institutions.

Moreover, among those different approaches, some museums might look at adapting the role of their entire organisation to promote social change, like the Whitworth and Van Abbemuseum are doing, others might dedicate a single floor in their building to their work with constituents, like the Tate Exchange project at Tate Modern in London and others again might work at a much smaller scale, one project or exhibition at a time. Besides, some organisations might be experienced in thinking about the needs of its users or constituents, while others might just be embarking upon that change process, and so the developmental stages of these constituent museum versions vary widely.

What is key to the idea of a constituent museum, and central to all of its versions, is that its relationship with its constituents is a mutual one, marked by equitable collaboration, reciprocal exchange, trust, and shared benefits. In practice, this means a sharing of the power that museums, as established institutions, have traditionally held. For them the voices of their local community constituents have become as important as the voices of their curators. It also means that within the organisation itself, decision-making power does not just sit with senior staff, but across the entire organisation. Letting go of power, however, is often an incredibly difficult thing to do for those who have been used to having it.

#### CHALLENGING STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

The most difficult and likely challenge that museums moving towards a constituent museum model come across is the risk of (often accidentally) engaging in tokenism. Wanting to be led by constituents' needs and wishes is an appealing idea for museums seeking to increase their social relevance, but if these ideas move faster than their structures can change, they cannot always deliver on their promises.

Imagine, for instance, a museum setting up a constituent committee or board with the goal of sharing decision-making power with community members. As long as the museum holds a veto over the decisions of that board, the power is not truly shared. The board, which was meant to co-create its decisions together with the museum, has become a consultation body with a merely tokenistic advisory function. It is a missed opportunity in terms of constituent-led working, but it also risks damaging the relationship with this community, who expected to be given real agency to make change, and ended up being disappointed.

It is a difficult balance to strike, because giving away power involves taking risks and going outside of a comfort zone. Besides, it is likely to encounter resistance when changing ways of working that have never been changed before. Inviting constituents to take part in museum decision-making processes often goes against the traditional practices of the museum and generally does not fit with how the museum's structures are set up. And if ways for constituents to meaningfully input exist at all, often they are not fully embedded across all parts of the organisation. Finally, it often happens that staff members struggle with the redefinition of their roles, having been used to providing experience and expertise to inform decisions, while now needing to make space for different kinds of experiences and opinions from non-professionals outside the organisation.

It can take a while before such a mind shift is achieved across the entire organisation and it requires committed leadership and genuine buy-in from staff. Moreover, it needs an investment of time and resources, because including more voices in a decision-making process often makes that process significantly slower. It is rare to have that extra time available, and contributions such as Outset Partners Transformative Grant that funds the Constituent Museum project at the Whitworth and Van Abbemuseum are rather unique. It is effective, however, for helping these museums to reflect on changes that are needed on a much bigger scale and to make a start with producing transformational, organisational, and possibly even systemic change.

#### CONSTITUENT MUSEUMS IN 2020 AND BEYOND

There is, of course, only so much a single organisation can transform within the much bigger structure of a museum sector, but especially within L'Internationale confederation it seems that constituent ways of working are spreading out in the museum sector. What has been a difficult few years in many respects, 2020 to 2021 has also forced museums across the sector to pause and reflect on how they serve their communities and how they might deepen those relationships. The Covid-19 pandemic has not only brought museums closer to hyperlocal audiences through very practical physical restrictions on movement, but it has also prompted them to think about what their audiences need and how these needs might be fulfilled.

Across the world, museums and galleries have found a wide range of new uses indeed. Queens Museum in New York started running a food bank from their building, museums in the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation network (Germany) donated their conservator's protective clothing and disinfectants to local health institutions, Castello di Rivoli in Torino (Italy) turned itself into a vaccination centre and many galleries introduced new commissions and micro-grant schemes to provide local artists and freelancers with an income. The wide range of Covid-related initiatives have offered new ways of thinking about how museums might be useful to their constituents, which might have a legacy well beyond the duration of the pandemic.

The years 2020 to 2021 show that, above anything, a successful constituent museum is an organisation that actively listens to the needs of the communities it serves, and that is flexible enough to adjust its offer to fulfil those needs. The overnight change that was required during the pandemic asked for rather extreme levels of flexibility, but as a result, museums might have gained confidence from having been able to produce such rapid change. Moreover, it might accelerate other change processes that they had begun already, and have made their organisations more nimble and agile.

Developing and strengthening their use value for constituents is what keeps organisations relevant and what safeguards their future. Therefore, a constituent museum has to listen actively and remain open to suggestions from the people it aims to serve. Its future in the end depends on what its constituents want and need it to be.

## A PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS THE CONSTITUENT MUSEUM

Charles Esche  
Director  
—  
Van Abbemuseum

The idea that became the constituent museum has developed over the past ten years in Europe, as a way to bring new voices into the stories around public collections that had been silenced by a social democratic expert culture. It grew out of a disquiet with the story of modern art inherited from that post-1945 settlement with its exclusions of class, race, and gender and its recourse to an ill-defined idea of 'quality' as the only meaningful criteria to judge art. Constituent working is therefore an attempt to forge a plurivocal museum, one that is able to include different narratives and approaches, without making any truth claims.

It also recognises the situated nature of the idea of art and learning in general, being content with framing art around specific histories of place and time instead of an imagined artistic universality. While the constituent museum is quite a recent development, it owes much to a much older understanding of art as a means to contribute to public understanding, expression, and engagement in a just society. As someone who has been involved in the trajectory of its emergence, I take this opportunity to revisit my own path towards constituent working within the context of wider museum and social changes over this period.

Within the museum, constituent ideas largely emerged from an initially tentative alliance between critical art institutional practices led by curators – what has been called new or experimental institutionalism – and community-orientated work led by museum educators.<sup>[7]</sup> These two elements were evident within art museums and independent exhibition spaces for some time, being evident as long ago as the 1970s in the discourses around institutional critique and community art practices. However, they were artificially held apart for a long time, largely due to the different status accorded them in the art world as well as the departmental divisions that usually allocated education a secondary role in relation to curatorial knowledge and artistic production.

The separation was also justified politically in the context of the modernist claim to artistic autonomy, in which artists and their work were encouraged to isolate themselves from their institutional or social context so that their supposedly free, individual expression would not be inhibited by the exhibitionary surroundings. This idea of artistic autonomy was largely grounded in the ideological competition of the Cold War in which art became a talisman of freedom in the West and slowly crumbled after 1989. Since then, slowly growing demands on culture for both popular success and cultural inclusion have shaped the political and funding environment for art institutions in this century.

3 — For example, the Happenings movement led by Allan Kaprow.

4 — Most famously Peter Vergo, with his 1989 book *The New Museology*.

5 — Particularly Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents', *Artforum* 44, no. 6 (February 2006).

<https://www.artforum.com/print/200602/the-social-turn-collaboration-and-its-discontents-10274>

6 — An overview of the language around this new *Arte Útil* philosophy can be found in Stephen Wright, *Towards a Lexicon of Usership* (Eindhoven, the Netherlands: Van Abbemuseum, 2013).

The last ten to fifteen years thus exhibit a more complex picture for art and art museums than in the period of high and post-modernism. Larger social and political changes such as the turns to participation, relationality, and decolonial theory meant that artists and curators became less tolerant of the homogeneity of modern art institutions and sought to reset relations with their publics. Contrarily, private finance for public art also increased and with it a new set of demands for exclusive access and benefits. Reconciling the public interest in, and public funding for, the arts with private finance and its demands is an ongoing struggle – even for an individual artist or curator – that has been fundamental to museums' recent history. If the constituent museum is a synthesis of critical and community art practices, it is also an attempt to resolve such a struggle by clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the public museum in order to give it room to manoeuvre in this new landscape.

This definition includes at its core the need for direct influence for what we call museum constituents over the institution's policies, programmes, and forms of mediation; an engagement with and mutual contact between the diversity of peoples in the immediate locality of the building; and understanding the collection/archives as a form of cultural commons in which use is regulated above all by the museum's constituencies. This way of understanding the art museum clarifies what needs to be done and also differentiates it from the logic of the art market. Through this process, it is easier to make clear the ethical compromise involved in taking whatever public or private funds are offered, build a consensus around the reasons for accepting them, and collectively defining how those funds are distributed. Constituent working in its way is a search for the new long-term settlement to replace the certainties of the Cold War period and reposition museums within a social order that aspires to be decolonial, anti-patriarchal, and post-capitalist.

The specific narrative that led the Van Abbemuseum to the Constituent Museum originated in Tania Bruguera's suggestion in 2011 to organise an exhibition in Eindhoven around the idea of Arte Útil, or 'art as tool'. This coincided with my first trip to Grizedale Arts in England and a meeting with Alistair Hudson and Adam Sutherland. [8] Having spent much of the previous decade working on the social and political agenda of art institutions and thinking critically about the exhibitionary form, the combination of these two encounters made clear to me that the museum needed to take its responsibility to its immediate environment more seriously and work consistently with the participants (later constituents) who were most obviously at hand. If the museum could have a meaningful impact locally, then I could see that a broader understanding might be developed, but that without that initial sense of being grounded, any pleas for care and common interest would be stranded in an art world that is easily dismissed as elitist and in the hands of the commercial interests that dominate the mainstream media's coverage of art. This realisation of the significance working 'on the ground' was also confirmed through learning more about museum programmes in Barcelona, Istanbul, Warsaw, and Ljubljana via the Van Abbemuseum's engagement with L'Internationale museum confederation. L'Internationale offers a translocal possibility for art museums by seeking not to promote a homogenised global art narrative as in the centralist museum model of

Tate, London or the Museum of Modern Art, New York, but by working with artworks, histories, and places through dialogue across different collections. L'Internationale offers a way to combine that sense of belonging to a place with a translocal community that can build towards a situated pluriversalism across European museums. In this way, the confederation has been able to write a different history of art in the 1980s and 1990s from the Anglo-American one, and has both published and exhibited on the question of art and use and the constituent museum itself. [9]

The constellation that makes up my understanding of the Constituent Museum is placed at the crossroads of artistic, curatorial, and institutional practice. However, even that meeting of disciplines is insufficient to motivate the wider change that this book proposes. Art as a tool and constituents as toolmakers requires something to emerge. That has to lie in understanding the art museum's new role in a European society struggling to come to terms with its colonial inheritance, the present loss of its dominance over the world, and the predictable collapse of its future in the climate emergency. In the face of all this, the definition of justice, democracy, freedom, and personal identity are inevitably being rethought.

That rethinking requires a shift in entrenched cultural values associated with such ideas as progress and modernity. Art, which has an intimate though uneasy relation to culture, is an effective way to peacefully address exactly these issues precisely because of that relation.

The coming conflicts need to be mediated if there is to be some resolution. Policy changes and political accountability need to be opened to user influence in a way liberal democratic states have not anticipated. It is our contention here that art museums, as the traditional places where culture is defined and displayed, are best placed to conduct that dialogue in a safe and secure way. This is certainly the aim of the Constituent Museum proposal: an art museum as an institutional tool for society to learn to live peacefully, and even joyfully, with difference and disagreement as a positive route to listen, react, unlearn, and relearn about ourselves and others.

7 — Lucie Kolb, 'New Institutionalism Revisited',  
On Curating 21, 2014.

[https://www.academia.edu/42280141/New\\_Institutionalism\\_Revisited?auto=citations&from=cover\\_page](https://www.academia.edu/42280141/New_Institutionalism_Revisited?auto=citations&from=cover_page)

8 — For Arte Útil see:

<https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/programme/programme/museum-of-arte-util/> and for Grizedale Arts see <https://www.grizedale.org/>

9 — See: <https://www.internationaleonline.org/>

or for the publications:

<https://valiz.nl/publicaties/constituent-museum.html>

# DECISION MAKING

## *Models of governance*

CITY BOARD DINNER AT  
THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM  
Olle Lundin

CONSTITUENT BOARD AT  
THE WHITWORTH  
Denise Bowler

ELIZABETH'S  
ÈFÓ RÍRÒ AND IYÁN  
Elizabeth B Mugera

ROBINA'S FAVOURITE FAMILY DISHES  
Robina Akhter

CONSTITUENT  
BREAKFAST MEETINGS  
Denise Bowler

FATIMAH'S DATE POPS  
Fatimah FagiHassan

ERASMUS CITY BOARD  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
Olle Lundin

## CITY BOARD DINNER AT THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM

Olle Lundin  
Constituent Curator  
—  
Van Abbemuseum

On 16 September 2020, a City Board Dinner was held to discuss ideas around the push and pull between the museum and the city and how to make citizens feel as welcome and at home in the museum as possible. The Van Abbemuseum (VAM) has been looking into operational systems for polyphony and collective decision-making for a while, and the City Board was one option to share decision-making power with Eindhoven and its citizens. This particular meeting was aimed at initiating a discussion on how a City Board could work, who the museum is dependent on to transform this idea into reality, and how the museum can pursue the work.

The City Board meeting led by Aminata Cairo – a consultant who engages people, communities, and organisations to implement positive change by focusing on the value of everyone's story – included: dinner participants: Esra Altmis (community organiser and initiator of WEARE1-Eindhoven and Stichting Ik Wil), Mpanzu Bamenga (local politician and co-founder of INCLEADERS, promoting inclusive leadership), Bernice Kamphuis (social sustainability advisor and initiator of Struikrover, Eindhoven), and Brenda Pattipeilohy (Eindhoven Black Lives Matter movement and former VAM intern); VAM staff: Yolande Zola Zoli van der Heide (Exhibitions Curator), Hilde van der Heijden (Programme Manager Education & Events), Olle Lundin (Constituent Curator), and Steven ten Thije (Collections Curator); and VAM staff (online): Nick Aikens (Research Curator) and Charles Esche (Director).

Through sharing experiences, Cairo positioned the participants' personal stories as central and encouraged them to share and connect on a deeper level, more so than if locked up in their professional positions. This enabled inclusion, the ability to listen to what was happening in the room, and for this question to arise: How can the museum continue to learn about inclusion through this practice?

During the evening it became clear that the practice of listening, sharing personal stories and perspectives is in itself a way to demonstrate the priority and value of long-term relationships. With this as one of the main takeaways from the evening, the VAM can continue to build strong relationships with partners and ambassadors to become a more constituent museum. Additionally, a rethinking of who is around the table is necessary to understand who is not included at the moment and what the institution's blind spots are. Reflecting on this in practice allows for inclusive and accessible decision-making processes. The museum can listen to everyone around the table, to relate to one another and collectively shift.

Following this meeting, the VAM continues to explore questions such as:

- What kinds of moments and formats are in place for the VAM to meet citizens and share stories, ideas, expressions, and suggestions in meaningful ways? Who are the people inviting, interpreting, and welcoming these interactions?
- What strategies, tasks, and skills are needed from museum staff in order to stay in touch with groups and individuals?
- How can these groups and individuals be regarded as regular contributors or collaborators beyond single-themed events or processes?
- How does the museum communicate effectively? Is this interpretation or presentation of constituent stories, exhibitions, projects, and the processes going on?
- How can the museum continue to learn and unlearn?

## CONSTITUENT BOARD AT THE WHITWORTH

Denise Bowler  
Constituent Museum Curator  
—  
the Whitworth

Many art galleries and museums have crucial boards to advise on operations. As a university gallery, the Whitworth does not have a board and much of its direction is informed by the University of Manchester's strategic goals, making strong connections to the wider university's aims across the schools and faculties.

It was an exciting prospect to set up and to trial the idea of a Constituent Board as part of the CMP's joint working aspirations – an ideal opportunity for us to compare and contrast different approaches across the two cultural organisations in a controlled manner.

Prior to recruitment for the board, it was essential to gain a commitment to ongoing support for this work from the director. It was assumed at this point that there would be payment for the 'board' members' specific expertise, with a nominal sum of £5,000 allocated for a minimum of four annual meetings plus one public convening event. For the pilot year, Outset provided the financial support to explore ideas around the role and logistics of a Constituent Board within the Constituent Museum Project.

A board can take several forms resulting in many discussions and options to consider. Who decides who is a board member? Who chooses the rationale of the board? Who determines the number of times the board meets? The list of questions goes on... and most importantly does the board have the power to make organisational change in the gallery? Does a constituent board operate in the same way as other institutional boards?

Originally, the gallery wanted to send an open call out for board applicants from the gallery's local communities. The board was to be launched at a host of outdoor events encouraging an intersectional representation of Manchester's people. Our first intentions were revised due to Covid-19. We counted ourselves very lucky as we were able to draw our first board from existing programmes at the Whitworth. A Pilot Constituent Board of eight gallery enthusiasts – an experimental board to establish what may work for the future Constituent Board.

The representatives were either nominated by the programme's collaborators or self-selected. We used our Anti-Racism Group's guidelines as a decision-making tool for a balanced group, with a minimum of 33% from the Global Majority in line with Manchester's demographics. The representatives were seen as ambassadors for their programmes and their communities. Everyone completed a simple expression of interest form outlining their relevant experience, interest in the Whitworth, and favourite artwork from the Whitworth's collection.

## THE PROPOSED AIM OF THE BOARD

For community voices to be heard and acted on. To effect internal organisational change. Members may scrutinise decisions within the gallery such as the collections policy, programmes, and access to remove barriers so that broader local audiences can enter and provide recommendations to prevent obstacles.

By October 2020, the chosen group of 3 men and 5 women (while ethnically and culturally diverse, the group has too few representatives to provide a true picture of ethnicities in Manchester and the gender profile we seek to address with future recruitment) range in age from 20–70 years old. They include artists, teachers, retirees, and a full-time student, all within a five-mile-radius of the gallery except for one individual based 20 miles away, with different backgrounds and professions providing a breadth of experiences to draw on.

Training was shaped by the members with collective ownership, ensuring a level playing field and common understanding of language and shared aims for the board. This was led by Rivca Rubin and Charles Lauder, who use a process called Upwording. [11] We met on Zoom and agreed to spend time co-designing workshops as an investment for future working. While there was some resistance as a few members wanted to get on with the job, there is a general understanding that this process facilitated group dynamics and ways of working. [12]

## HERE ARE SOME OF THE WCR'S ASPIRATIONS.

### *In five years, the Whitworth is...*

- full of exhibitions that attract different and broader audiences
- a place with a 'constituent board' that makes decisions
- a gallery that has projects taking place in the local community at timely intervals to encourage and provide incentives to get their foot in the door
- a gallery with a board that are advocates for the community and find ways to bring micro-community issues to the board and gallery
- equipped with a board who meets with the director
- an art gallery that feels comfortable and feels like it's our place
- reflecting on a completed project that endeavoured to find out why some local people don't visit in order to listen to the community
- furnished with a café that is led by mobile communities with affordable food
- a place with vibrant sounds (not quiet)
- a space for local artists to exhibit
- reaching out to people beyond Manchester including regional visitors

## UPON SHARING THEIR FIVE-YEAR VISION, THEY REFLECTED ON IDEAS THAT THEY LIKED:

- people co-curating exhibitions
- local schools leading projects that could be delivered to other schools as artists
- a community café
- a community cabin/outdoor space
- a sense of belonging
- an invitation to more people in the community to visit to feel the gallery is for them
- range of interesting or relevant activities to hook people

## AFTER THE TRAINING HAD TAKEN PLACE, I DEVISED QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP TO CONSIDER TO PUT UPWORDING INTO PRACTICE TOWARDS THE NEXT STAGES FOR THE PILOT GROUP, SUCH AS:

### *How we can turn obstacles into opportunities?*

- Always refer back to the intention, so that if an obstacle is someone's negative opinion ask: Does this benefit the community? Who benefits? Is this progressive?
- Self-reflection helps transform obstacles.
- A positive attitude to problem solving and by taking the long view.
- Discuss and determine what is the obstacle within the group and remain positive; if you do not have a solution or idea, test what it is like to support another's proposal or pass for now and contribute once ideas start to flow again. Great proposals flourish in a positive environment.
- The park is a good place to walk and talk within our own individual groups, any local park that is easily accessible. Create a habit of meet and greet talks.

This is one example of many in which the group share collectively possible solutions. The group has established good listening skills, providing fairly equal time for one another to speak. There is permission to be quiet.

The group has found their name – Whitworth Community Representatives. There were several options and a final name arrived through calm discussion. For them, the most important aspect is clarity and inclusiveness. This is how they see themselves as community representatives, who can act as representatives for their communities to make sure those groups are not overlooked. Collectively, each member sees themselves as a representative with a key role to act as a bridge between their local community and the Whitworth.

The pilot group have shared their consensual recommendations with Whitworth staff in August 2021. Their first meeting with staff marked the start of a conversation where both staff and the WCR can work together to realise their aims. In response to the WCR's suggestion to make processes in the art gallery transparent, Ann French, Collections Care Manager and Conservator, Textiles, is to host conservation workshops on how to care for personal treasures to invited local neighbours. Our Cultural Communications Coordinator wants to set up a web page for the WCR on the gallery's website to raise their profile and a space has been allocated on a staff magnetic board for WCR members to share their stories.

In 2022 \* a further 3 new members are to be recruited. The pilot group feel strongly that the group can be more representative of Manchester's demographics and the recruitment process can use a variety of approaches such as community days in Whitworth Park, social media, hand-delivered invitations, and notices in spaces such as health centres, launderettes, community boards, and newspapers. The pilot group want a more informal process for the expression of interest: to ensure that writing is not the only form of communication used to show interest, for example, a conversation at a community day. Board members can potentially be voted for via social media.

The Whitworth Community Representatives have an embedded paid role in the gallery's organisational structure working on future programming prior to proposed exhibitions and events, final confirmations. Each year, the WCR can host a public event, they will run and chair their meetings, share their minutes and recommendations, and work across teams rather than one specific curator. They will continue to identify and bring new constituents to the Whitworth, where there is an interest and need from those communities.

\* Since the writing of this publication the Whitworth Community Representatives have recruited several new members. This note is to acknowledge and thank them.

#### WHITWORTH COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Abdimalig Ibrahim Whitworth Young Contemporaries  
Aysha Yilmaz Artist  
Luke Adamson Artist  
Elizabeth B Mugera Still Parents  
Lucette Henderson Teacher at partner primary school  
Julie Knight Whitworth Volunteer & Whitworth Voices  
Harry Spooner Handmade  
Isabel Wright Friends of the Whitworth

11 — See: <http://www.upwording.com>

12 — See: Section 7 for a more detailed account of the Upwording process.

#### ELIZABETH'S ÈFÓ RÍRÒ AND IYÁN

—  
ELIZABETH B MUGERA

#### METHOD

1. Preheat the oil.
2. Add the diced onion and stir-fry till golden brown.
3. Add the blended peppers (check notes below for details) and fry until the sauce thickens up.
4. Season with the stock cube, add salt to taste, crayfish.
5. Stir until everything is well blended.
6. Add the meat and some water or stock to thin out the sauce, then cover it up again and allow it to come to a simmer.
7. Finally, add the spinach and mix thoroughly. Then leave it to cook uncovered for about 2 to 5 minutes.
8. Adjust the seasoning if necessary.

#### NOTES

ÈFÓ STEW  
340 g cooked meat  
(I use chicken or beef but you can also use chunky root vegetables)  
2–3 bags of fresh/frozen spinach  
2–3 scotch bonnet/habanero peppers  
1 large brown onion  
1 clove of garlic  
2 tins of peeled plum tomatoes  
1 large bell pepper  
60 ml of stock  
(from the boiled meat cooked earlier)  
60 ml of vegetable oil  
(I use vegetable oil, you can also use olive, sunflower, or coconut)  
2 tsp bouillon  
2 tsp crayfish powder  
(omit if vegetarian or vegan)  
Mixed herbs  
Spices of your choice

1. Use a blender to blend the sauce for the stew. Put the peppers, onion, garlic, and bell pepper into the blender with the contents of the 2 tins of peeled plum tomatoes.
2. Make sure to keep an eye on the stew and stir constantly till you achieve a thick consistency.
3. Adding the meat and spinach: Add your seasoning first (slice in some onions if you like) and stir, then add the meat and let it cook for a while so it can soak in the seasoning and sauce. Then, stir in the spinach.

Serve with the iyán.



## ROBINA'S FAVOURITE FAMILY DISHES

—  
ROBINA AKHTER

### DAAL KADU

#### INGREDIENTS

2 Kadu pumpkins (long or aubergine -shaped pale green pumpkin squashes)  
250 g chana dal  
1 tsp ground chilli

#### METHOD

Peel the pumpkins and grate. Add the grated pumpkin to a large pan and add water.

Rinse the chana dal to remove the starch and then add to the pan with the pumpkins.

Cook for 20-30 minutes until the dal and pumpkin is well cooked.

Use a hand blender to make the dal smooth. The texture is personal preference whether very smooth or still with some texture.

### OKRA, TOMATOES & ONIONS

#### INGREDIENTS

2 medium onions  
2 handfuls of okra  
4 tomatoes  
Sunflower oil  
Chilli powder

#### METHOD

Slice the onions and fry until soft and starting to colour.

Trim the ends of the okra and slice in half. Place in a frying pan with 2 tbsp of sunflower oil. Fry the okra until the middle stringy bits of the okra have all disappeared – once this happens, the okra is cooked.

Chop the tomatoes. Add the okra and tomatoes to the onions.

Add the chilli powder. Cook for a further 10 minutes until the vegetables are cooked.

## CONSTITUENT BREAKFAST MEETINGS

Denise Bowler

Constituent Museum Curator  
—  
the Whitworth

### PAKORA

This can be made with any combination of onion, potato, aubergine, or cauliflower.

#### INGREDIENTS

2 medium or 3 small onions  
3 potatoes, medium-sized

Or

1 aubergine  
Half a small cauliflower  
2 tbsp pomegranate molasses  
1 tsp chilli powder  
1 tsp ground coriander  
1 tsp ground ginger  
Gram flour  
(enough to coat the vegetables)  
Sunflower oil

#### METHOD

Peel and slice the onions finely. Peel, cut in half, and then slice to thinnish slices for potato or aubergine. Rinse the potatoes with water to remove the starch. If using a cauliflower, divide into small florets.

Mix ingredients, onion and potatoes, or aubergine or cauliflower, in a large bowl.

Add the chilli, coriander, ginger, and molasses and mix very well with your hands.

Sprinkle over the gram flour, a little at a time until the vegetables are coated and continue to mix using your hands. Make it an even coating, not too wet that it drops off but so that it coats the vegetables.

Heat oil in a wok or large saucepan.

When the oil is hot enough, take a small pinch of a potato and a few onions and drop into the oil. You will know the temperature is hot enough when the bundle of vegetables rises to the top. Fill the pan with 10 small groups of vegetables. Once the pakora has become a golden colour, remove with a slotted spoon and leave to drain in a sieve resting on a bowl. Once all cooked, drain on a kitchen towel and serve straight away with chutneys, raitas, and the dal.

For me, food, people, and conversation are the perfect companions.

It was from this premise that I invited a combination of our existing Whitworth partners and local neighbours to a series of conversations over an informal breakfast, on their way to work or after dropping the kids off at school. We hosted three working Constituent Breakfasts at the Whitworth held in the Whitworth's café providing a vegetarian menu tailored to suit our invitees.

It was an opportunity for us to convene, to share ideas about the Constituent Museum and the new direction of the gallery – a starting point for a lively exchange. More importantly, it was a forum to hear from our constituents, about what community groups were interested in and how they could make their ideas happen at the Whitworth and whether it was an appealing space for them.

We agreed that art is not just for the 1%, a luxury item for the elite or a place where only museums dictate what we see as art in our society. We chatted about the possibility that a different type of museum can exist. There was an interest in a museum that can be useful – what that looked like was still up for debate.

The first Constituent Breakfast welcomed religious leaders – some with a wealth of experience from working at the Whitworth – such as the Sikh community who had used the gallery to host their celebration for the founder of their faith, Guru Gobind Singh ji. They brought in hundreds of new people and developed ingenious ways to make it more accessible, even hiring a local primary school's car park to extend parking availability. Others were fresh to the Whitworth, including several Buddhist communities. In this first meeting we built on the already existing rich inter-faith network and it was clear that there was an interest in hosting more of these events and these communities wanted to introduce the gallery as a space to see art and a safe place to meet asking: What is a constituent museum? What's a constituent? What is a useful museum? Do we all have the same understanding of these words? If a museum has a useful focus, is some art useless? We discussed how art could be a tool for social change.

The second breakfast brought together artists and community groups that had exhibited projects, art, and worked with the collection to tell their stories in the Collection Centre. This larger group had many ideas for how they would like to use the Whitworth, with many wanting to use their art practice to connect with local communities.

The third breakfast convened a group who came about from a conversation with James Eldon, Principal of the local secondary school, Manchester Academy who suggested meeting with Somalian mums eased by Mohammed Adam, the Academy's School/Community Liaison Officer. The mums wanted to develop their English but had few opportunities to practise due to their family responsibilities and work. It was their first visit to the Whitworth, and they came to life in the tapestry exhibition on at the time – it spoke their language and had them pointing to examples they could also make. While their thirst to explore the textiles was interrupted by Covid-19, we did chat about hosting a workshop in their language and learning English through conversation about tapestry, which we are sure to revisit once the gallery is fully re-opened.

The next step was a Constituent Brunch during which we planned to make clay tiles with residents within a one-mile radius to introduce the Community Garden in the park and discuss engagement with the Whitworth. Since the interruption of the pandemic, we are reviewing what this can be with our the newly established Whitworth Community Representatives, possibly offering a range of soups cooked by our constituents on National Soup Day in February 2022, the results of which we will factor in to build on the community's new needs.

#### WHITWORTH VOICES

During the lockdown in March 2020, it felt timely to reconnect with our friends from the Constituent Breakfasts and revisit their original ideas and aims and to plan the next steps. These playful meetings took place weekly on Mondays, each named A Constituent Catch-up with a... the first one being Virtual Cup of Tea. It was an opportunity to meet socially to share current concerns and feelings towards the lockdown.



As the lockdown continued, these meetings shifted to fortnightly and are now monthly. The group has renamed themselves Whitworth Voices, with an eye on the future in the hope that this becomes a forum for local people to be heard and plant seeds of ideas. The logo was designed by Fatimah FagiHassan, an illustrator and a co-collaborator on WYC (Whitworth Young Contemporaries). Whitworth Voices commissioned a logo to feature on the group's social media: Twitter to engage with local businesses; Instagram to share stories, and Facebook to focus on events at the Whitworth and in the community.

The social media description was developed by Julie Knight, who, as an active member of the Whitworth's community, is a volunteer, artist facilitator, Whitworth Voices co-creator, and Pilot Constituent Board member. Julie conveyed her passion for this project in developing bespoke text for each platform to encourage new people to join Whitworth Voices. Whitworth Voices is a collective group of creative minds with a love of art that is

open to all communities. We aim to draw out community voices to co-develop events, co-create programmes, and make changes to the Whitworth to make it more accessible and inclusive.

Most recently, Whitworth Voices facilitated Cook Club on Zoom, launching with Date Pops – a recipe shared in advance to make our own variations using alternative tools when necessary. It was an inclusive way of making the same food, problem-solving along the way. Our next evening focuses on mezze using a recipe from the Whitworth's café – all to be made within an hour and with a few more people joining.

Whitworth Voices is a wonderful, warm, open group of people, with a range of talents and experiences, in and out of the gallery. They are people-focused, enthusiastic about the gallery, our local areas, and proud of Manchester. Connecting with people is one of their key drivers as well as art. This is what they want to achieve with Whitworth Voices.

Whitworth Voices and the Cook Club continue to run monthly.

Thanks to Alan, Claire, Fatimah, Jonny, Judy, Julie, Karol, Robina, Shabana, Sukhbir, and Tricia who all co-developed Whitworth Voices during the various lockdowns.

#### COOK CLUB

This was a spin off of Whitworth Voices and was suggested by the group as a way to reach out to the community online. The aim is to make simple recipes, all in an hour, using everyday ingredients and general equipment. Cooking without barriers.

## FATIMAH'S DATE POPS

FATIMAH FAGIHASSAN

WHITWORTH VOICES MEMBER

### METHOD

Makes about 12 even-sized balls depending on how big you make them. Ideally, each date pop is big enough for 2 bites.

#### INGREDIENTS

250 g pitted dates  
100 g chopped pistachios  
Drizzle of olive oil  
200 g icing sugar

#### EQUIPMENT

Food processor/anything with a blade/  
hand blender/potato masher  
Frying pan  
Plastic container with a lid

If you want to substitute the chopped pistachios for any other nut then go nuts! I highly recommend pistachios. You can use ground coconut or ground pistachios instead of or as well as icing sugar.

#### FEEDBACK

Thank you, Fatimah, for your great guidance in making energy balls! They are such a treat!

I really enjoyed this evening. It was nice and relaxed, these are most therapeutic to make.

I'm showing off with these with my sisters and friends!

Add a spoonful of oil to a frying pan and heat it gently. Add the dates to warm through until they become soft and start to smell really good! Dates can be chopped or whole. The dates start to look like a soft paste.

Put dates in a food processor or use a hand blender to make into a uniform paste. The dates will still be warm.

Roughly chop the pistachios as these will add texture and crunch to the dates. Be careful not to make the nuts too small. Add the pistachios to the dates while both are still warm. Mix until they are both really well mixed together.

Put a layer of icing sugar in your plastic container. Start to roll the date pops between your hands using circular motions to make a ball shape approximately the size of a walnut in a shell.

When you have rolled your first ball put it in the container. No need to roll in the icing sugar yet. Keep rolling your balls until all date paste has been used up.

All the balls should be in the container. If too full, take a few out and wait until the first batch has been done. Put the lid on and shake to cover the balls. Then taste one to see if it's good! Then repeat in the lidded container with any that haven't been dusted with icing sugar. Share with friends and family. Best on the day. If any date pops are left store at room temperature. Enjoy!



## CONTEXT

The politics of setting up a City Board are numerous. Attuning to the power relations within one's institution, and analysing the possibility of actual change are only two factors that play a major role in defining the framework of such an endeavour. The Impact Centre Erasmus supported the Van Abbemuseum's aim to seriously investigate the implications of such a process by providing an in-depth report, based on numerous interviews with people from the cultural sector and beyond, taking into consideration inclusion, organisational change processes, and experience from various advisory boards, patient boards within healthcare, and city boards. This is a summary of some of their findings that are relevant for us at the VAM as we develop our work on the City Board.

The report presents two possible options: an 'Assessing City Board' and a 'Co-creating and Advisory City Board', with a preference for the latter.

The 'Assessing City Board' would respond to specific questions asked by the museum and provide feedback on them. The risk with such a format is group discussions with little impact. When it comes to anchoring the feedback in the organisation in a sustainable manner this type of City Board is not advised. Inclusion has been talked about for a long time with very slow progress. Action is needed.

The 'Co-creating and Advisory City Board' would also give unasked-for advice and co-create. As an integral part of the institution, the museum would be in dialogue with the Board Members. Many respondents advise inviting Board Members as working members. The respondents position four parts of the museum that need attention:

- The Organisation
- The Employees
- The Members of the City Board
- The Society

## THE ORGANISATION

The effect of a City Board is closely linked to the culture in an organisation. Inclusion is only possible when the organisational culture is set towards that goal. An organisation with an open culture among employees and their surroundings, through making connections and sharing experiences is, therefore, a precondition. The respondents position these conditions as what an organisation needs to fulfil in order to succeed.

- Commitment from directors and top of the organisation is a big factor for success
- Inclusion is a strategic issue that requires policy. For the implementation of policy, certain competencies are required. It is important to gain insight into whether the organisation has these competencies in-house.
- Inclusion takes place in the organisation and not in a City Board that stands next to the organisation. The respondents advise that the City Board be an integral part of the organisation.
- The City Board needs to be supported, it needs input. This means that the organisation must provide adequate time and budget.
- The City Board is ideally led by someone who dares and has the skills to deal with resistance. Coaching in leadership, personal development, and developing specific skills in regards to working with constituencies is necessary to develop the right competencies.
- The organisation will take the advice from the City Board seriously and implement suggestions where possible. It is important to communicate all decisions to the Board.
- It is important to get insight into the readiness and willingness of employees to further inclusion. There is no point in having a City Board in an organisation that is not ready to work on inclusion.
- Inclusion as a project is doomed to fail as the lights will fade when the project is finished. Another risk in project-based inclusion arises when it is done by individuals from different departments. It is advised to anchor inclusion within the entire organisation.

## THE EMPLOYEES

Other than a strategic question, inclusion is also an operational question. The employees are therefore closely linked, whereby the following elements have surfaced in conversations with the respondents:

→ It is valuable to look at the diversity conditions within the organisation. Connecting numerous lived experiences and perspectives in the organisations when these diversity conditions are not representative of society will prove difficult.

→ When an organisation takes an inclusive direction, it may bring tension and abrasion among employees. Support from employees is essential. It is necessary that everyone is involved and wants to contribute to this process. To ensure committed employees, it is important that they see a positive personal again. A readiness of the organisation to further inclusive changes can be influenced by training, workshops, and coaching to simulate inclusive thinking and praxis.

→ The City Board should not be the only initiative to further inclusion in the organisation. The City Board can only be used to speed up the process of inclusive thinking and doing.

→ In order to bring all employees into the inclusive practices of the City Board, it is important that someone within the organisation acts as a catalyst or ambassador to bring energy into the process. This person establishes connections inside as well as outside the organisation.

→ To stimulate inclusion, a bottom-up approach is essential. The employees and the members of the City Board should have the feeling that they have made something together.

## THE MEMBERS OF THE CITY BOARD

The respondents advise keeping in mind the development and praxis of the City Board.

→ Let the City Board be a mirror to society to help the museum engage with relevant and current societal topics.

→ Keep the members of the board committed. The members must experience a benefit from participating. That can vary from financial compensation to a feeling of prestige or satisfaction.

→ Give the members of the City Board something back. The museum can consider offering their services as a platform, so members can bring in, as well as receive knowledge and experiences. In this way, individual members and cultural organisations can make use of the facilities and knowledge the museum generates to professionalise and profile themselves further.

→ The museum should take the advice of City Board members seriously and show results.

→ Communication is extremely important. While it may not always be possible to realise all of the board members' advice, it remains important to communicate why certain advice was not followed up on so that the members feel heard and understood.

→ A City Board should be considered an integral subsection of the museum (not a loose hanging part next to the organisation). This can be achieved by continuously involving the City Board in processes the museum goes through and decisions taken.

→ Having the members of the City Board physically available at the museum at some point in the week allows for them to have direct contact with colleagues of the museum. This makes it easier to get things going.

→ When members of a City Board give unsolicited advice or co-create, it is important that they have sufficient content to formulate advice and ideas. This means that regular contact moments are needed. These meetings can focus on topics of inclusion, but this is not always necessary.

→ Facilitate interactive and dynamic processes through which everyone's voice is heard. Offer members of the board (individuals or organisations) the opportunity to collaborate with the museum. You will encounter problems that will need to be discussed to be solved. Going on the road together and co-creating with the members of the City Board is essential in this respect.

→ Develop things with and by people, rather than for people. Everything that you do with good intentions for people can probably be left behind.

→ Don't expect inclusion, progress, and participation exclusively from members of the City Board. Try to connect with the city through the City Board.

## THE SOCIETY

The respondents also advise establishing connections with society to increase the value of the City Board.

→ Museums have little to no access to determined target groups. The museum can find these people in collaboration with citizen initiatives of civic organisations. These can help shape a board with diverse perspectives that view things in multidisciplinary ways.

→ Art allows for dialogue to take place and can visualise what is happening in society. Art must therefore be accessible to everyone. Even when the building, exhibitions, and collections of the museum are accessible, it does not necessarily mean that the art is accessible to everyone. It is therefore valuable to move into society and be visible there.

→ The City Board should propose societal topics to expand on and investigate. Collaborators and partners are therefore very important in order to address these topics. Sustainable integration of diverse perspectives must be established in this process. The exhibitions and programmes that the VAM offers do not have to be relevant to everyone in society at the same time. However, through connections with particular initiatives of civic organisations the relevance and accessibility will be stimulated for the large variety of interests and affinities that Eindhoven holds.

→ It could be interesting to bring about a change that not only has an effect on the VAM, but on the whole city. In this way the City Board can build bridges with society and the VAM can be a source of inspiration and motivation. If the VAM chooses this approach, the museum should make an inventory of possible partners in order to form a coalition with parties that have a common goal.

## FORMING OF THE CITY BOARD

There is no blueprint for how the stakeholders are chosen. Here are some respondents' words of advice:

→ First, the goal of the organisation and the outcome must be clear. Before the City Board is formed, the VAM needs to ask itself: What problems do we need to address as an organisation and what is necessary to solve these problems?

→ The City Board should be formed bit by bit.

→ It is advised to compose the City Board as diversely as possible so as to mirror society. Marginalised and non-dominant groups should belong in the City Board so that everyone has access to the discussions.

→ The VAM should think of what target groups are missing in order to understand who is represented in the board. Based on this, the museum can think of a profile from an intersectional point of view (gender identity, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, phase of life, dis/ability, and class).

## FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE CITY BOARD, THE RESPONDENTS HAVE IDENTIFIED THREE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS:

1. City Board with individual members
2. Mixed City Board with individuals, representatives, and social organisations
3. Thematic City Board

### CITY BOARD WITH INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

A City Board as a broad representation of the city, including people who do not regularly visit the museum or might not participate in society (dis/abled or neurodiverse people, those with low income or low literacy, refugees or people who experience racial discrimination). It is important to involve individuals that can share their own experiences and perspectives. The City Board should in this case be as representative as possible. It is therefore important that the individual connects with the museum and with society. Depending on who is in the board, there will be specific accessibility demands. The museum will need to pay particular attention to how these needs are met and facilitated.

One possibility is to keep this City Board consistent while also working with other groups on specific themes. These working groups will change over time and can be composed based on the expertise needed within the specific endeavours.

## MIXED CITY BOARD WITH INDIVIDUALS, REPRESENTATIVES, AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS

A City Board consisting of individuals and informal networks. Representation of the city is also an important element to hear all voices of the city. This City Board will consist of representatives from different target groups, such as ethnic populations or disabled people. These groups are all representatives in organised meeting groups, housing corporations, or municipalities. These housing corporations and municipalities have advisory board groups who might have representatives for the VAM. The VAM can consider reaching out to representatives and asking them to be a part of meetings. When people from civic organisations are involved, it is easier to build bridges with society. The museum should be aware that in a mixed City Board, with diverse representatives and organisations there is a risk that people act in their own interests. Also, here it is possible that the composition of the board stays consistent and to work with working groups when it comes to specific topics.

## THEMATIC CITY BOARD

A City Board consisting of target groups that deal with topics organised by affinity, identity, and/or geography. The key to inclusion is to not consider people as separate target groups. Some respondents warned that a selection based on different 'sorts of diversity' can be stigmatising. It is also a possibility to take on inclusion from a thematic point of view. This begins with knowing what is at play in society and looking for target groups that deal with these topics. The museum can exhibit and programme the topics so that they incorporate a variety of perspectives. Representation is of less importance here, since different topics will always be more relevant to certain target groups than others.

## CONCLUSION

In this report potential ways to compose a City Board with success have been provided, considering risk factors the VAM may have to consider. Since the composition of the board is dependent on what the VAM decides, many respondents emphasised that there is no blueprint as to how the ideal City Board will work. Composing a City Board will be a dynamic process in which the VAM will learn what works best on the way. Based on the interviews we can conclude on success factors that the VAM can put into place to ensure and enlarge the inclusion of the organisation in collaboration with the City Board. Here you will find an overview of the success factors and points of attention.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- Communication is important. Communicate the reasons for the choices you make with the City Board. External inclusive communication is even more important – do you say what you do and do you do what you say?
- The members of the City Board must see that the museum is using their advice and that the museum takes the advice seriously.
- Formal and informal contact between the members of the City Board and the museum colleagues must be facilitated.
- Work with, and through, people, not for people.
- Appoint a process supervisor to link the City Board, the city, and the institution.
- Commitment from the directors is a necessary condition for inclusion to succeed.
- Broad organisational support, awareness, and inclusive thinking among employees is necessary for inclusion to work throughout the organisation.
- The City Board should not only be a bottom-up initiative, but also stimulated and supported by policies from the top. Thus, the City Board should become an integral part of the institution.

## POINTS OF ATTENTION

- When you have an inclusive composition of the City Board, this places many demands on how such a board should meet or be facilitated.
- Get started seriously. The danger with a board is that it is a small patch that starts bleeding out.
- Coming up with an instrument to work towards a solution can backfire since the focus will be on the instrument and not on the solution.
- Be aware that a process of co-creating with the City Board can lead to abrasion and resistance within the organisation.
- People from social organisations and representatives can be important for the board, but be aware that these might act based on their own interests.
- Working together with employees is vital. Only when employees start to think and act more inclusive will it be possible to be more inclusive as an organisation. This is a long process that requires a multi-year investment.

Should you wish to access the full report, please contact the VAM.

# RELATIONSHIPS

*In the gallery  
and out in the  
community*

DESEGREGATED PUBLICS  
IN THE LIVING ROOM  
Olle Lundin

SANDI'S TEA WITH MINT  
AND DATES WITH  
DARK CHOCOLATE  
Sandi Hilal

FRIENDS OF THE WHITWORTH  
Tricia Tierney

TRICIA'S  
MANCHESTER TART  
WITH A TWIST  
Tricia Tierney

STILL PARENTS  
Lucy Turner

SUE'S SAUSAGE SURPRISE  
Laura Gallagher

WERKSALON:  
HISTORY AND BACKGROUND  
OF PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES  
AT THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM  
Olle Lundin

Relationships take time  
to build. Let's slow down,  
give time to listen, to  
respond to, to question,  
and to build together  
with our intersectional  
collaborators.

## DESEGREGATED PUBLICS IN THE LIVING ROOM

Olle Lundin  
Constituent Curator  
—  
Van Abbemuseum

You walk into the Van Abbemuseum via the main entrance. Before you arrive at the cash register to pay for your entrance, Shafiq Omar Kakar, one of the hosts of the 'Living Room', welcomes you and invites you to take your shoes off and share a cup of Afghan tea with him. From there on, as tea flows, the conversations go in all kinds of directions.

The Living Room is a crucial project in the Constituent Museum process that has deepened and expanded over the last year at the VAM. In December 2018, artists, researchers, and architects Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, formed the collective DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Research) as an integral part of the Positions #4 exhibition at the VAM. The Living Room first opened its doors in 2018 and had its second iteration in 2020, with its third scheduled for 2021.

Located between the domestic and the public sphere, the Living Room (Al-Madhaafah in Arabic) is a space dedicated to hospitality. Enabling hosts to play a public role the Living Room has the potential to subvert the role of guest and host, giving a different sociopolitical meaning related to the act of hospitality. It seeks to mobilise the condition of permanent temporariness as an architectural and political concept. This condition challenges the binaries of inclusion and exclusion, public and private, guest and host. In activating the right to host for temporary people, such as migrants and refugees, agency is central. The Living Room aims to be a catalyst whereby people can claim their right to life in a new place without feeling obliged to revoke the desire for their life back home.

As citizens of Eindhoven, the people living in permanent temporariness, the hosts themselves, should have access to public debate. The hosts of the Living Room are people currently alienated within public space and who have to deal with questions of belonging and where home is for them. These roles are not specifically related to class, nationality, ethnicity, or gender, nor are the hosts simply marginalised people in the community, but rather people who are grappling with these questions, and wish to redefine their assigned role within the public sphere.

Space is also central to the project. And by this the artists don't mean the space itself, although it forms the architectural and spatial ground for the politics of the project to function, but rather the activation of space and support for the hosts and what is needed for their work. The museum cannot simply build the architectural installation and consider the work done. The process needs an agile institution that is willing to invest, not in materials, but in relationships. The Living Room is a place where feelings of private and public come together. This is done as the host transforms their living room into a public space, creating both an intimate form of public space and providing the host with a sense of agency and entitlement.

And so, sharing a cup of tea in the Living Room becomes both convivial and political. Or as Shafiq so eloquently puts it, 'the tea is magic.'



## SANDI'S TEA WITH MINT AND DATES WITH DARK CHOCOLATE

Boiled water  
Fresh mint  
Black tea  
Sugar

Boil the water, add at least one spoon of sugar, then fresh mint and finally the black tea.

## DATES WITH DARK CHOCOLATE

Dark chocolate  
Dates (I usually use the Medjoul  
dates from Jericho)

Melt the chocolate and dip the dates in it.

They are a great combination with the mint tea.

## FRIENDS OF THE WHITWORTH

Tricia Tierney

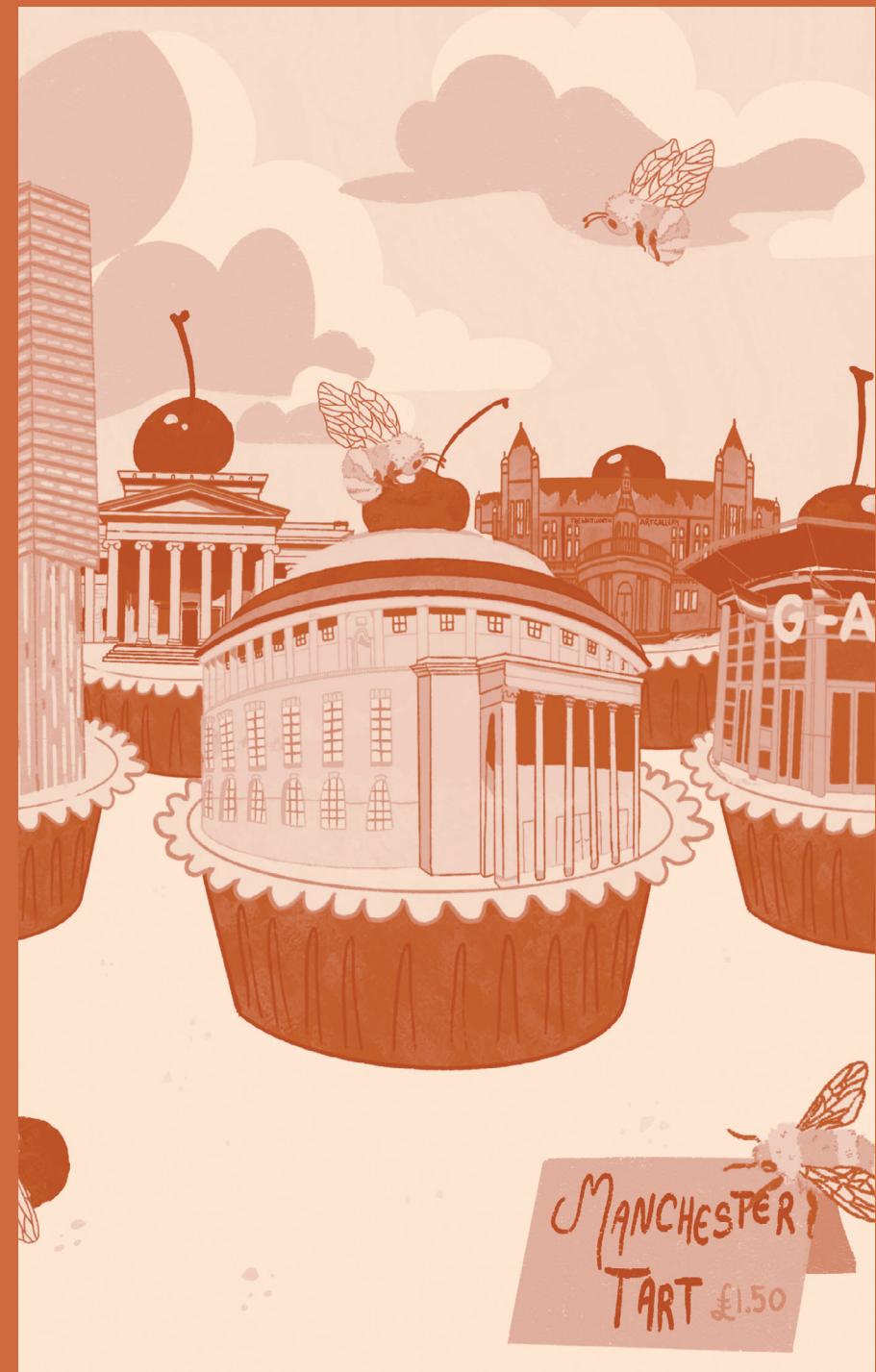
Chair of The Friends  
of the Whitworth

—  
Whitworth Voices Member

The Friends of the Whitworth, a volunteer-run organisation, may be the earliest of our gallery's 'constituent' groups. We were founded in 1933 by the gallery's Director, Margaret Pilkington, 'to enrich the collections through the purchase of works of art.' The inaugural meeting was held in the home of Sir Thomas Barlow on 27 November and we still have the minutes of that meeting and a list of those who attended. It sounds like a very grand event.

In the first year the Friends presented 8 drawings and an etching to the gallery and since then over 1,000 works in the gallery's collection have been acquired with our help. We are very proud of our legacy!

Times change, of course, and the needs of the gallery change too. We are still often called on to support acquisitions but in both the 1960s and more recently, when the gallery has undertaken major capital development projects, the Friends have contributed to these as well. Increasingly now we are now being asked to support gallery programmes and posts, including those associated with the Whitworth's new identity as a Constituent Museum, influenced by the diverse community in which it is sited. It has been a pleasure to meet new visitors who care about it as much as we do, and to listen to and learn from their perspectives. We hope that our openness to new ideas is reflected in the way we work, especially in our social media, where we try to reach out to the widest possible audience – our members and our not-yet members!



TRICIA'S  
MANCHESTER TART  
WITH A TWIST  
—  
TRICIA TIERNEY

Tradition and an openness to change is a great combination. With that in mind, we would like to offer you a slice of a Mancunian childhood favourite, but one that we've adapted, adding new and exciting flavours - Manchester Tart with Chilli Pastry and Cardamon Custard.

METHOD

FOR THE PASTRY:

175 g plain flour, plus extra to dust  
50 g icing sugar  
Pinch of salt or chilli powder  
90 g chilled unsalted butter, cubed  
1 medium free-range egg yolk  
1 tbsp ice-cold water

FOR THE CUSTARD:

6 green cardamon pods, seeds crushed  
4 large free-range egg yolks  
5 tbsp caster sugar  
5 tbsp custard powder  
1 tbsp vanilla bean paste  
750 ml whole milk  
  
6 tbsp raspberry jam  
A banana - optional  
50 g desiccated coconut  
(You can toast the coconut in a dry pan, but be careful not to burn it!)  
23 cm loose-bottomed tart tin

MAKE A PASTRY SHELL:

Sift the flour, icing sugar, a pinch of salt, and a pinch of chilli powder into a large bowl. Add the butter, then rub by hand until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Beat the egg yolk with the ice-cold water, add it to the bowl and mix into the flour mixture using a knife until it comes together (add a little more water if necessary, but be careful not to add too much). Turn out onto a floured surface and knead briefly until smooth, then roll out thinly and use to line the base and sides of the tart tin. Trim the edges, then chill for 20 minutes.

HEAT THE OVEN TO  
180°C/160°C FAN/GAS 4

Line the pastry case with non-stick baking paper or foil, fill with a thin layer of baking beans. You can also use uncooked rice for this. Bake for 25 minutes on the middle shelf until the edges are golden. Remove the paper/foil and beans/rice, then protect the top edges of the pastry with strips of foil. Bake for 5 minutes more or until the base of the case is crisp and golden. Remove and leave to cool.

MAKE THE CARDAMON CUSTARD

Remove the seeds from the cardamon pods and crush the seeds. Mix the egg yolks, sugar, custard powder, vanilla paste, and 3 tbsp of the milk in a bowl until smooth. Pour the rest of the milk into a non-stick pan, add the crushed cardamon seeds, and heat until almost boiling. Leave for 20 minutes to allow the milk to absorb the cardamon flavour, then warm the milk again slightly.

Gradually stir the warm milk into the egg yolk mixture, stirring constantly, then return it all to the pan and cook over a medium heat, still stirring all the time, until the mixture is smooth and thick. Let the custard cool.

CONSTRUCT THE TART

Spread the raspberry jam over the base of the tart case. Slice the banana and place on the jam in a thin layer. Pour the custard into the pastry case and lightly level the top. Sprinkle with the desiccated coconut. Chill for at least 1 hour or until cold enough to slice. Serve cut into thin wedges.

## STILL PARENTS

Lucy Turner  
Early Years Producer  
—  
the Whitworth

Still Parents is the Whitworth's award-winning programme to support families who have experienced the loss of a baby in pregnancy and just after birth. The project was launched in October 2019 in partnership with Sands (Stillbirth and Neo Natal Death Charity) and provides workshops that allow participants to explore and share their experiences of baby loss through art, with the help and guidance of an artist, alongside support from Manchester Sands, the local, volunteer-led branch of the national charity Sands.

Still Parents was founded by Lucy Turner, Early Years Producer at the Whitworth as a response to personal experience of baby loss:

I experienced a stillbirth in 2016 when I lost my daughter Jenny. I never accessed any support groups as I just didn't feel like they were for me. I wanted to create something that I would have wanted in the hope it might be what others needed too.

—  
Lucy Turner

And it seems it was what people wanted. Within a few days of the initial launch the workshops were fully booked with forty enquiries for fifteen spaces resulting in the decision to double the sessions in order to meet the high demand.

The workshops have been promoted through our partners Manchester Sands and bereavement midwives and counsellors who signpost newly bereaved families to the programme.

The feedback that I have had to date and the actual artwork that I have seen is poignantly beautiful and moves me more than words can say, they take my breath away and I can see the power of art in action.

—  
Bereavement Midwife  
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Still Parents provides a different method of support to the usual Sands talk-based support group meetings. The art and act of making is at the heart of the sessions. Participants are introduced to new mediums and learn new skills while surrounded by people with shared experience of baby loss. There's no pressure to talk, no pressure to share just to feel supported by a community that you know understand the pain.

Alongside practical creative workshops with carefully selected artists and practitioners, participants have been introduced to the Whitworth's collection with the help of the project Curator. With visits to the stores and guest visits from the Whitworth's wider curatorial team, participants have had the opportunity to access the Whitworth's internationally significant collections to identify works that resonate with their individual stories.

Since the project was launched in October 2019 the participants have been working towards a constituent-led exhibition (24 September 2021–4 September 2022). The exhibition is a combination of those works from the collection, chosen by participants, as well as works produced by participants in the practical workshops. Throughout every stage of the project our participants have been consulted and their responses have shaped all aspects of the ongoing programme and exhibition. Even as the project was forced to move completely online, the project team arranged virtual check-ins with each participant. This investment and level of care that participants feel they have received has been key to creating a sense of shared ownership in the project and its outcomes.

<https://www.instagram.com/whitworthstillparents>

The sessions are so valuable to me, just knowing I can spend time with people that have experienced baby loss without the expectation that I have to speak is just so comforting. I find being creative and involving J in that is just so special. It's dedicated time to spend thinking about him, which is so precious to me.

—  
Still Parents participant

Thanks to the amazing support of the Whitworth as a regular member of their Still Parents sessions I feel like I belong, like I can talk about my baby that isn't here. Each month for the last year we have come together in the gallery (or more recently on Zoom!) to connect, create, chat, grieve, celebrate, support, and be with each other. We're parents of other babies, the ones who didn't make it. I feel like it's here that I can be a parent to our baby in some small way, talk (if I want, and not if I don't). It's a lifeline to me, to be able to just be with these other parents, in collaboration with them, in community and in common.

—  
Still Parents participant

This really spoke to my pain and what I was going through. So many other members of the group were drawn to the same piece and had their own individual and unique take on it. It was the first time I saw everyone and their grief. We experience it differently but we were all in the same boat. It was a unifying moment for me to be reminded of the power of art and its ability to bring people together. It was the moment I knew for sure I was really in the right place that could help me on the journey of healing, forgiveness, and recovery. The Whitworth has provided a place for us and our memories of our lost babies and a safe space to process healing and moving forward.

—  
Still Parents participant

In partnership with Sands, Stillbirth & Neo-natal Death charity, the Whitworth launched a series of free art workshops for those who have experienced the loss of a baby during pregnancy or just after birth. It is a chance to explore and share personal experiences through art with the help and guidance of an artist. These images provide a flavour of the Still Parents' workshops.

Image far right:  
Edvard Munch, Two People – the Lonely Ones, 1899, the Whitworth, University of Manchester. Presented in 1989 by H. M. Treasury in lieu of inheritance tax from the Estate of the late Mrs. Ann Carol Kroch





## SUE'S SAUSAGE SURPRISE

LAURA GALLAGHER

Mum would make this for me and my sister when we were younger and money was tight, but it was actually our favourite! We lost mum in 2006. I think when bad things happen I always miss her even more. Making this helps, sharing it with my family helps too. I always do it in her old Pyrex dish, that closeness to her and those memories give me some peace with my grief. She gives me strength.

## Laura Gallagher, Still Parents participant

9x sausages  
11x peeled potatoes  
150 g grated cheese  
Tin of chopped tomatoes  
Glug of milk  
Generous spoon of butter  
1 tbsp of oregano  
1 tsp of ground pepper  
Sprinkle of salt  
Squirt of Lea & Perrins,  
ketchup, and brown sauce

## METHOD

Preheat oven - Gas Mark 8

Boil the peeled potatoes in a pan and add a pinch of salt.

Meanwhile, cook the sausages on the stove. Once they are cooked you can then easily drain off any excess oil from them.

While the potatoes and sausages are cooking, time to prepare the tomato mix! Empty into a bowl and add a squirt of ketchup, brown sauce, and Lea & Perrins sauce. Stir well. Sprinkle in oregano, salt, and pepper for flavouring. Stir mixture and put to one side.

Now the sausages are cooked, remove from the pan. Slice down the middle and spread them over the base of an oven proof dish.

Next add the tomato mixture on top.

Now it's time to make the mash! Drain the potatoes and add butter and milk. Mash them until they are lump free. Now fold some of the grated cheese into the mashed potato.

Spread the mash over the top of the tomato mix. Add the rest of the grated cheese onto the top and drizzle a little Lea & Perrins sauce.

Put in the oven for approximately 20 minutes or until the cheese has begun to crisp.

Remove from the oven and share.

# WERKSALON: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES AT THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM

Olle Lundin  
Constituent Curator  
—  
Van Abbemuseum

## PARTICIPATION AT THE VAN ABBEMUSEUM

Before we look at what happened in the Werksalon over the last two years and look forward to what might happen further down the line, it is important to position the history of participatory museum practices at the Van Abbemuseum.

Collaboration, participation, usership, ownership, and constituent impact have been a core part of the VAM's mode of operation since Charles Esche became Director in 2004. Visitors have been able to request artworks from the museum depot and respond with text and images (Viewing Depot, 2006–09). These were printed on the walls creating a kind of hallway between the depot and collection presentation. From 2012–17, a tool shop was installed as a mediational experiment of the collection presentation, based on theories explored by Jacques Rancière in 'The Emancipated Spectator'. By providing various tools that spoke more to the senses than the eyes, the seemingly passive spectators were made active agents in their museum experience. In the D.I.Y. archive (2013–17), visitors could become curators for a day – creating their own presentations, prints, objects, artist books, posters, slides, video works, LPs, and audiotapes to tell their own stories with artworks from the collection. And finally, the Museum of Arte Útil (2013–14), led by Tania Bruguera, allowed visitors to explore art objects as devices: How can we 'use' the museum? How can the museum become a site of production and output, rather than display? The aim was to turn the museum into a social power plant. Via these trajectories, we arrive at the establishment of the Werksalon in late 2016.

For more information, please see:

<https://studio-inclusie.nl/kennis/de-stad-in-het-museum-terugblik-op-twee-jaar-werksalon-in-het-van-abbemuseum/>

## WHY A WERKSALON?

*What if city residents become temporary curators?  
What stories will they tell, and how?*

To find out, an entire floor of the VAM was transformed into a space to be filled and curated by 'constituencies' and groups of citizens – the Werksalon. This lab-like place became a space in which the museum and the participants could learn about inclusion, collaboration, the city, and what people living in Eindhoven think. Participants could design interventions in the collection presentation with the support of the museum staff (curators or educators). The aim was to add the perspectives and voices of the groups as visible and readable statements throughout the museum (2017–20). With no defined 'Werksalon method' or roadmap for an inclusive museum, lessons were learned along the way and many questions arose. The groups that the museum worked with in the first eight months were central for this learning process.

## THE WERKSALON IN SHORT

- Six groups were active in 2017–18 and an additional two in 2018–19. Some developed their own programming, investigated artworks, or were more loosely linked to museum activities.
- Curators and educators collaborated with the groups, listening to their needs and affinities and together developed a process of exploration in relation to the collection presentation.
- Each group made a banner with a quote, statement, or motto. This banner was hung in one of the exhibition halls. The groups also presented themselves in the Werksalon, through a wooden panel with text, image, and sound elaborating on their specific focus and activities, available for all visitors to see.
- In the first season a closing party was organised by and for the groups and their networks. In the second season this was organised as several separate final presentations on different days.
- The groups could decide if they wanted to present an activity, exhibition, or lecture in June; and if this should take place inside or outside the museum.

To get a deeper understanding of the impact of the Werksalon, the museum held interviews with a number of stakeholders:

#### SEASON 2017-18 GROUPS

**The Expats Spouses Initiative** — Expats moving to Eindhoven for work often bring along their partners. This group looked at what is necessary to feel at home in a city.

**The Queer Constituency** — This group, initially formed around the Queering the Collection initiative, organised workshops, events, and book clubs aimed at bringing a queerer lens to the museum to represent people outside of heteronormative structures.

**Soroptimisten** — Part of Soroptimist International, an organisation dedicated to supporting women's rights, this group looked at the position of women in art and the challenges this brings.

**Agents of Change** — Four social designers brought together Eindhoven-based socially engaged initiatives.

**The Green Guests** — A group of young professionals that dedicate themselves to practising activism for the climate crisis presented an artwork that slowly disappeared and organised dialogue sessions.

**The VAM choir** — A group of museum volunteers and employees initiated a choir giving museum tours through musical compositions in various languages.

#### SEASON 2018-19 GROUPS

**The networks of Vluchtelingen in de Knel** — 'Jihad al Nafs' means 'fight with yourself' in Arabic. A group of refugees asked if we, as a society, are willing to understand each other's struggles.

**Students of the International School Eindhoven** — What does it mean to be present in current society? A group of students looked at the challenge of living in the now constantly merging online and offline worlds.

#### WHAT'S IN IT FOR US? PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS

We already knew each other, because we are all involved in sustainability in Eindhoven. During an initial exploratory meeting, we realised it was nice to talk about these topics in peace and in a different environment, without working towards a solution. We appreciate that the museum is trying to reinvent itself. I am a designer and I am constantly innovating, re-exploring the field. I really liked seeing that the museum is doing that and I wanted to be part of it.

—  
**Fiona Jongejans,**  
**Green Guests**

We wanted to participate because the museum gives us a platform. For our foundation it is important to be known, to show that this is about people and not an anonymous group. And it gave our clients a purpose, something to work on, something to learn from. They get so few opportunities for that.

—  
**Anouk Willemsen Habanakeh,**  
**Social Legal Counsellor, Vluchtelingen in de Knel**

I hoped it would have been more radical, but maybe I'm impatient. This was an investigation into how relationships work. You have an institution and you are part of it. I have so many crazy ideas that I still want to implement. I would have expected a bit more involvement from the museum. Not 'here you have a space', but 'here is your budget and we make our knowledge available'.

—  
**Malou van Doormaal, participant,**  
**Queer Constituency and organiser, Drag-Ups**

## THE DAILY REALITY OF RUNNING A WERKSALON

Within the museum, a team of three employees and two interns worked on the Werksalon.

The Werksalon was occupied by groups 30% of the time, but was unoccupied 70% of the time, which meant that visitors often came into an empty room only being able to read texts about the Werksalon, but not experience it.

During the Werksalon process we noticed that language can be a barrier to really understanding the experience of others. During the process, the museum noticed that doing and making things or eating something together is an important tool to create connections.

To bring people into the museum that normally do not interact with art and culture, it was important to have someone very close to the groups that could be the bridge. Sending out an email was not enough to invite people. A personal connection and ongoing interaction was necessary to make the museum feel less intimidating and more open.

Some groups were more challenged to leave their comfort zones: the Expats Spouses learned to activate an artwork without being experts in art, the group of refugees learned to tell their stories in photography, which normally they would hide. The students from the International School of Eindhoven learnt how to lead a workshop for adults, where normally the roles are reversed. For other groups that were used to working more autonomously, such as Queer Constituency and the Green Guests, the Werksalon was less of an experiment, more of a continuation of their already existing practices. As such the museum learned that every group needs to be supported and guided differently.

In the first season of the Werksalon, the museum asked the groups to contribute with something that could be added to the collection presentation. This turned out to be a too big and too abstract task for the groups. In the second season, it was decided to connect each group with an artist who could translate the stories and experiences of the group into something physical.

In the first season, the VAM had the intention to mainly listen and not give many rules. This approach turned out to be too open for most groups. Therefore, in the second season, the planning was changed into more clear steps with deadlines for the groups. With each process being different for each group, the Werksalon stimulated a deeper understanding of the power structures within the institution. Working in the Werksalon context, the curator's role is not only to present the collection and to facilitate groups. This is a shift in the traditional role of the curator.

## THE INCLUSION DREAM

The Werksalon is a place to actively investigate collaboration and inclusion within a museum context. The VAM aims to be a safe space that includes multiple perspectives, but sometimes exactly these well-intended inclusive interventions can be alienating and excluding.

Some groups grew out of a collective feeling of misunderstanding, exclusion, and oppression. To create a place where these groups feel safe it is crucial to understand what these groups require to be understood and respected. The museum can be a place where interactions and meeting people is aligned with safety, to become a space of empowerment. Furthermore, questions around the equality of the groups and the museum were raised. How can the museum and the groups interact on the same level, and how can a balanced interaction be created to ensure a fair and beneficial relationship for both sides?

The bigger question behind the Werksalon is: What does it mean for a museum to be inclusive? To me, that is about how you welcome and host people inside an institution. That goes for hosts, tour guides, for all the staff. And we didn't have much impact on that, I guess. I do think we had great programming and the Drag-Ups were a great addition to the Thursday evenings. But is that inclusion or a clear programmatic intervention? Looking back, if we had defined more ambitious goals and projects, we would have focused more on interacting with the museum guides and hosts; taking them into the LGBTQI world, work with queer hosts and guides, see how we can give some permanency to the interest. But I think those are things that we are realising now, it's a process, which will take a long time.

—

**Olle Lundin, coordinator,  
Queering the Collection and part of the Queer Constituency**

I think life is a kind of art. Everyone has a different inspiration. And everyone has a unique story and a unique problem. That is what the Werksalon does: to make this kind of art visible. We have to recognise each other's problems. That's the platform we try to make here. I think that is art. To understand each other's inspirations and problems. A museum is a platform to let different people meet and talk. To break chains but not in a typical way, because art is the medium and art is visual. Art gives you space to connect in a different way.

—

**San Sigithan,  
Participant, Foto Workshop, Vluchtelingen in de Knel**

I think the museum should be a place to encounter different people. In safe spaces learning moments are directed or transformed into politics, which means that people don't actually learn anything since they are scared of saying something wrong or disrespectful. I think it is better if people interact and talk about their ideas, and about the backgrounds they have that drive these thoughts. Of course, this can also mean that someone says something that hurts.

—

**Luca Soudant,**  
Participant, Queer Constituency and workshop leader  
during 'End of the year party', 2019

#### IMPACT AND CONCLUSIONS

You might hope to read whether it worked. However, the VAM does not yet know if it can be a home to different Eindhoven residents in the long term. The Werksalon is a first step towards this, giving Eindhoven residents more ownership. For now, the short-term impact is seen in the group, its individuals, the museum, an increased awareness and visitor numbers.

I think with our workshops we brought people into the museum who never would have come otherwise. And that is good. Once people have seen the museum, then they can say they are just not interested, but at least after their experience they can form an opinion. The last time I guided the workshop and gave a short lecture about the artist and the work, there was a girl who came up to me and said she was quite disappointed. But that's ok. She thought about it, she tried. So yes, let's do more to give people this experience.

—

**Marianna Faccenda,**  
Workshop leader, International Locals

#### TAKEAWAYS

- It is important to question how art professionals relate to, and work with, the experiences of users of the institution.
- It is vital to consider what is expected from art professionals when museums increasingly become common ground to interact with constituents.
- The VAM aims to connect groups within the city, museum, and collection, but interaction between the groups themselves was scarce.
- Until now the museum has worked with one constituent model, but identities are multiple and there are many more ways to connect with people beyond identity. Moreover, the question arose as to whether Eindhoven is represented within the museum's groups. Is society too broad to be classified in specific groups? Perhaps it is more interesting to work with overlapping themes such as grief, birth, loneliness, love, hunger? Affinity can be a way forward.
- The collaborative work with the groups set up new ideas for how to enter into dialogue and what this means. Through the collaboration with Vluchtelingen in de Knel and Expat Spouses it became clear that sometimes words get in the way of real connection and that doing something practical really contributes to more purposeful cooperation.
- Mediators and curators are required to organise ways for the groups to connect, provide structure, and facilitate them with substantive knowledge of the museum collection.
- The museum and groups should determine what their interests and goals are for a particular activity before advancing with the idea, so that everyone can mentally adapt and prepare.
- Not everyone can feel at home in a museum at all times. This is a utopian aspiration. It is important to rather focus on 'not everything is for everyone, but we have something for everyone'.

The Constituent Museum at the VAM follows on the Werksalon's model by making the relationships with constituents more sustainable and long lasting. Throughout this book we will see more initiatives on what that practically means.

# OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

## *Constituent Museum Pilots*

WIE ZIJN WIJ? / WHO ARE WE?  
TRACES OF OUR COLONIAL HISTORY IN BRABANT  
Silvan Vasilda and Vivian Heyms

WHO ARE WE?  
Shammai Martis

EXPERIENCE OF THE PROJECT  
Yannick Mol

OAKLAND PROJECTS REVISITED  
Denise Bowler

ALINA'S CHURROS  
Alina Akbar

EXPERIENCES OF OAKLAND PROJECTS REVISITED  
Alina Akbar and Mohammed Saif Khan

SAIF'S FRUIT SALAD  
Mohammed Saif Khan

UNFAMILIAR COMMUNITIES CASSEROLE  
Millie Throp

WIE ZIJN WIJ?  
WHO ARE WE?

TRACES OF OUR COLONIAL HISTORY IN BRABANT

Silvan Vasilda

Project Lead

—  
Wie Zijn Wij? / Who Are We?

Vivian Heyms

Project Lead

—  
Wie Zijn Wij? / Who Are We?

Last year we ran a research project at the VAM 'Who Are We?' to discover traces of the colonial past in Brabant. We thought it was important that a project about the colonial past was not generated and led by a museum, and instead owned and steered by Brabant citizens. Central to this programme are the personal research and perspectives of thirty people from Brabant who reflected on their own experiences.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE COLONIAL PAST PLAY IN OUR LIVES?

In our research project we look at this past together with a diverse group of people from Brabant. We mainly focus on the underexposed traces in Brabant. What has been passed on – consciously or unconsciously? At home, we often talk about the impact that history has on society. Through this project, we became increasingly aware of our own patterns and behaviours that were brought about by the past. By seeing and trying to understand this we can learn, unlearn, and heal from it.

All the research is based on individual, group, and family conversations in turn based on different themes. Initially, we started with individual conversations to discuss what was happening among our group members. This became the basis for the entire project. It was followed by

monthly family and group conversations and it was from this that our exhibition, video, and podcast series arose. However, not everything we discussed has been shared publicly. The group discussed sensitive topics and should feel safe. Everything we share with the outside world is discussed with the individual group members first.

History has often been told unilaterally. The colonial past still dominates the system in which we live. Is it actually in the past? If you ask us, our colonial past is unconsciously and consciously still part of our daily existence. With this project we further investigated and took a closer look at this. In both the past and the present, we can see that it's people's feelings that are not always recognised enough. For this reason, a safe environment and open communication is central. Everyone's personal story, opinion, and vision is important to us for this project.

In the following texts you will read testimonials by Shammai Martis and Yannick Mol, two of our group members. They share their perspectives and experiences within 'Who Are We?'



## WHO ARE WE?

Shammai Martis

Participant of Wie Zijn Wij

This project invited me to think about the question 'Who am I?' Participating was both exciting and a little daunting, because I knew that it would involve a certain level of confrontation with myself, but it was also very necessary for that exact reason. I think that a project like this is very valuable for anyone trying to find out who they are and what their history is, regardless of where they are in that process. Personally, I had already started my search, but this project has given me direction and challenges me to go out of my comfort zone. I also saw my participation as a chance to share my story in a safe and kind space and to find recognition with other people.

My experience so far is that the project feels like an exhilarating walk through the forest, but one that is shared with others, who all walk their own path, but happily share a compass with you whenever you feel lost, and sit down with you around a warm campfire when it gets dark. In 'Who Are We?' I am learning lots about our colonial past and this knowledge comes from many different sources: from artworks in the museum, from workshops we can take part in, and from conversations among ourselves. What I particularly appreciate is that feelings and personal experiences are also considered valuable sources of information. Our group conversations take many different forms and because of that I am learning a lot about how the traces of colonial history can be seen from many different perspectives. I am therefore

not only gaining academic knowledge, but also a kind of knowledge that is rooted in other people's feelings – knowledge that is at least as important, especially with a subject as sensitive as this one, it is important to listen to each other.

What I really appreciate is the genuine interest and care with which Silvan and Vivian conduct the project. They pay much attention to creating a safe environment that allows space for everyone. Talking about your feelings and personal experiences can be nerve-wracking, but doing that in a non-judgemental space produces confidence and has taught me that my feelings are important. I think the project leads do not only demand and take, but also give very much. They demand vulnerability and openness from participants and in turn share a lot about their own personal processes. This creates a connection and makes me feel that I am not merely an object in the museum that people can gaze upon, but that there is space for the real story behind the person. It is also great that participants are allowed to express themselves in ways that suit who they are. For instance, some have wanted to do that through poetry and spoken word, others prefer to write. All of those different approaches are welcomed, and this means you can view the participant in their purest form. That's what gives the process such beauty.

The museum visitors are similarly invited to think about what they see, answer

questions, and confront themselves. They do not only look in from the outside, but also look within themselves. This is something I have not encountered in museums very much and I think it should be done more. I think it would help people to understand what they are actually looking at, and that a museum visit can therefore be emotionally as well as intellectually stimulating. It would be great if 'Who Are We?' could be established in museums in other cities as well.

This should not only take place in museums, but also across Eindhoven itself. We are a multicultural city and, even though I have always felt at home, things like the discussions around the Dutch Black Pete\* tradition show a darker side to the city of lights. There is so much to learn about each other and we can do this with each other. A next step could be to try and reach a new audience with this project. Not just new visitors, but also new participants perhaps. Groups that seem to stand in opposition to each other could engage in dialogue together and possibly learn about how a shared history can help us to build a positive future together. I think this could be a great challenge, and the 'Who Are We?' project could play an invaluable part in creating that change in Eindhoven.

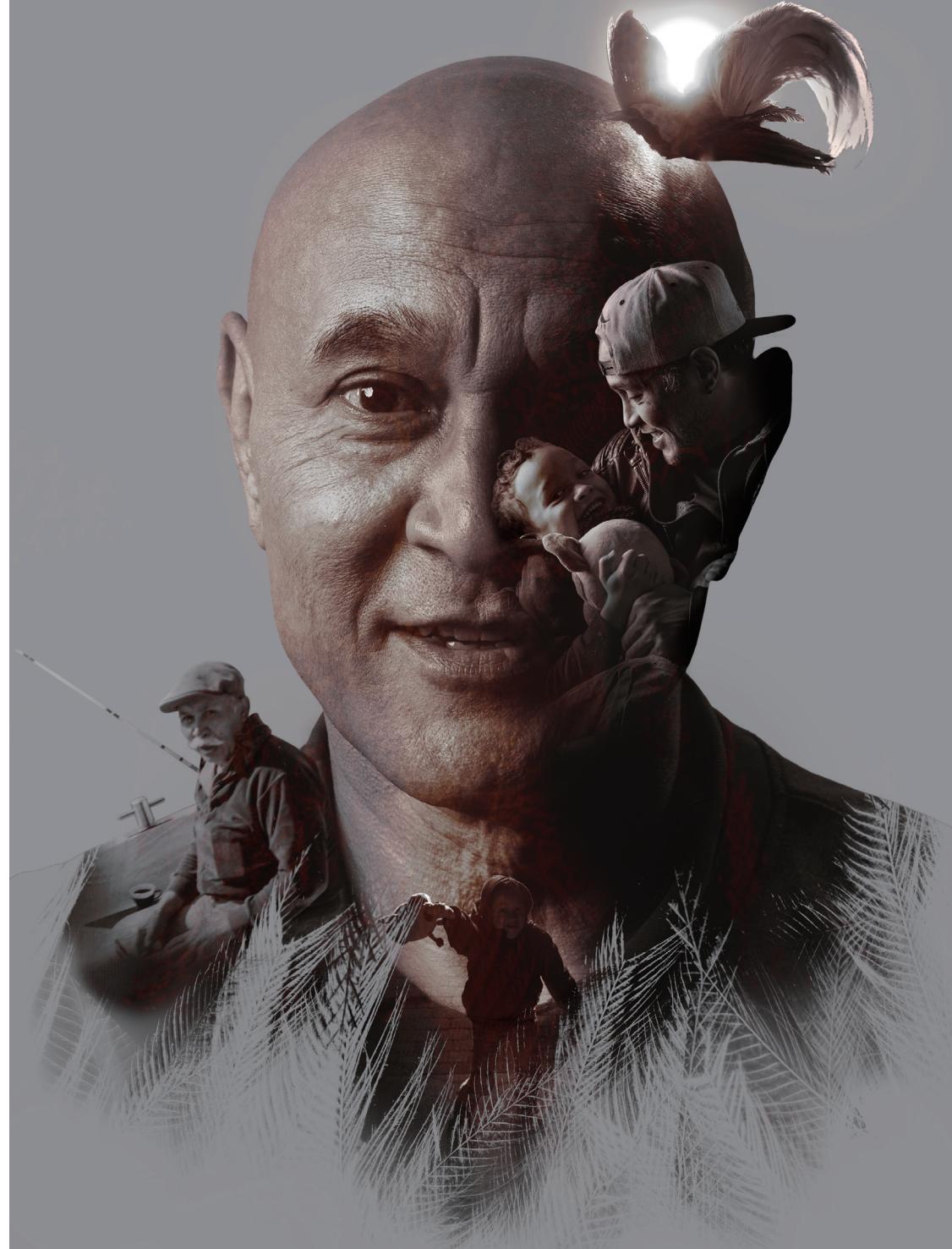
[\*Translator's note: The Black Pete discussion is a debate around the abolishment of a Dutch children's holiday tradition involving blackface costumes].

<https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/research/research-programme/who-are-we/>

This work depicts 4 generations – from father to son. If you look closely, small details have been incorporated, which refer to my Moluccan roots.

The Moluccas are a group of Islands known as the Spice Islands in Indonesia.

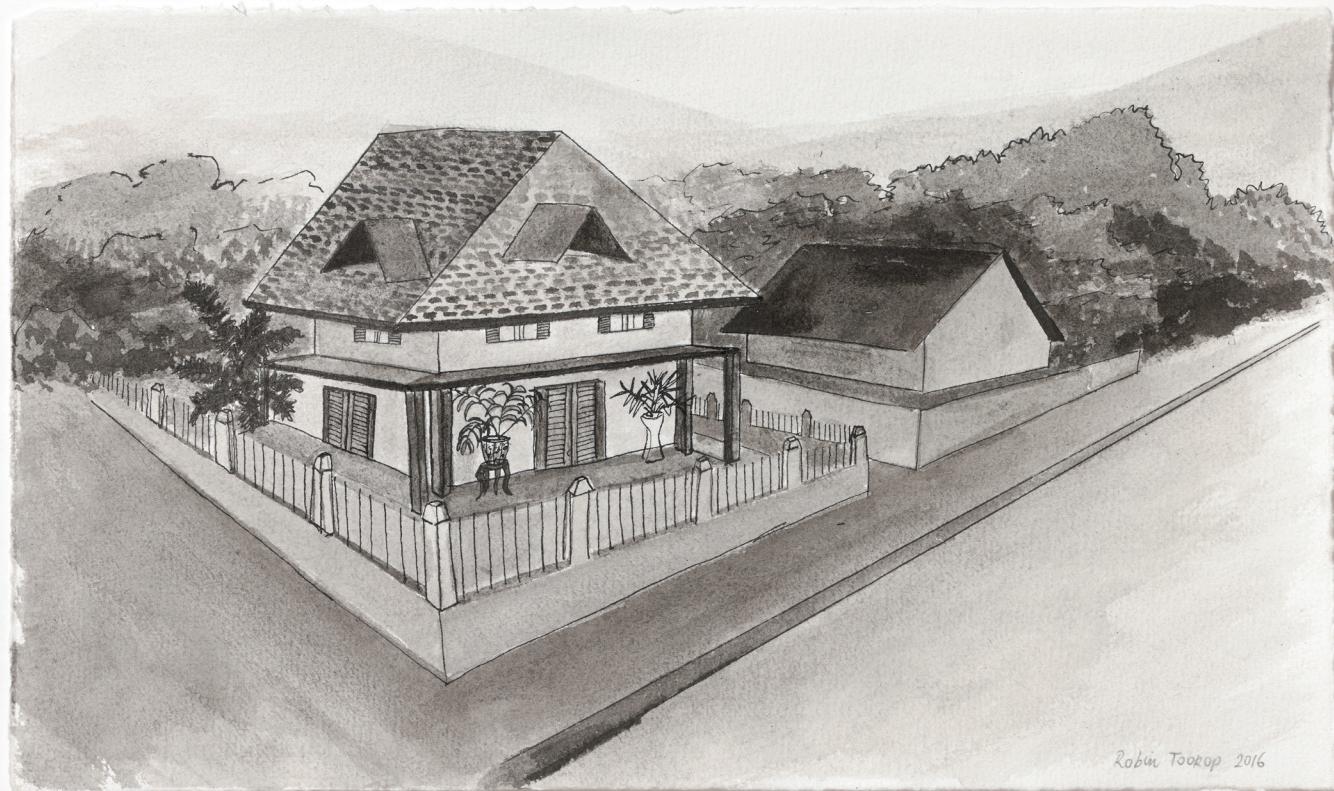
Giovanni Boerjan



This ink drawing comes from my father's dreams and stories about Indonesia. He was very young when he and his family left Indonesia, so for him, life there is a kind of dream. In his head, he has a picture of the area and the house where he lived, but he can't remember exactly what it looked like. I have converted the image he carries in his head into this picture.

I am also very curious about Indonesia. Especially about the Indonesia where my grandfather and grandmother grew up. My grandparents didn't tell me much about their life in Indonesia, which is why I have so many questions about the place where they grew up. What was life like there? Were they happy? Because I have few answers to questions, I started to create a fantasy image.

Robin Toorop,  
Wie zijn Wij participant





Yannick Mol — Photographer: Diewke van den Heuvel

## EXPERIENCE OF THE PROJECT

Yannick Mol

Participant of Wie Zijn Wij

My personal interest and participation in the project has been twofold. My family has roots that can be linked directly to colonial history, but I am also part of a generation that has lots of questions about this history.

In our family we did not openly speak about the effects of our colonial past, or about the impact of the World War II on Indonesia, for example. However, those impacts did lead to one side of my family moving to the Netherlands after the war. With help from Vivian and Silvan we found many answers to these questions. They managed to recreate a family tree going back to the 1800s, and traced it back to our current generation. I found answers I never expected to find, for which I will always be grateful to them, and which I will make sure to pass on to my own child(ren).

The project involved a diverse group of participants, some of whom I have known for a long time already. It has been incredibly interesting to learn more about their roots and to understand their perspectives too. Consequently, we ended up having conversations between us that we never had the occasion to have in our private lives. Those new insights into each other's thinking created a new sense of connection between us.

It was immediately clear from the first group conversation at the VAM that people

were going to be bringing really interesting experiences and knowledge to the conversations. Having both younger and older generations and many different heritages represented in the group, we started to see some clear differences between the generations. What struck me particularly, was that everyone had a very open attitude towards hearing each other's stories and about the topics that we were presented with. At the same time, there was also space for questions and for giving each other constructive criticism. In a time when we should all come together, we can see great divides being maintained and sometimes even increased. The fact that the VAM offers this young research group the chance to work on this project, is in my opinion something that other museums should take as an example. To finally focus on and be honest about our history can only add to the process of us collectively coming together. Especially because people of all generations still receive such vague and even incorrect information about these times.

I am curious what would happen if a similar project would be run on a bigger scale. Because, by asking the right questions and finding out about someone's (family) history, you will always end up finding connections, whether on the side of the participants who have a direct link to colonial histories, or on the side of those who do not. The simple fact that there is

attention placed on these questions will already help to create understanding and build knowledge about the different sides of the colonial coin and to combat division in our current times.

Up until now, I have been lucky to participate in a physical group discussion (before Covid-19), a Zoom group conversation, and, together with my sister, I have also been working on the podcast. In the podcast we are diving into the history of my family, together with Vivian, Silvan, and Romanee. To my surprise, they were able to track down a great number of documents and pictures, which have not only helped to make our family tree much clearer, but also more visual. The concept behind the podcast is to chronologically take us through the history of the Dutch East Indies, and how my family fared throughout that time. As mentioned earlier, this goes back to the 1800s and stretches to the period of World War II. Naturally, all of these answers also created many new questions. Vivian and Romanee supported us in reaching out to the relevant institutions (which only direct family can do) to obtain more information. This has recently resulted in an extensive report about the events of World War II and how my family ended up in the Netherlands. So far it has been an emotional and illuminating journey, and we are extremely grateful to the project group for their hard work and commitment to tracking down all of this information.

You will not find any points of criticism coming from me about the research and the subtopics we have covered. However, they have all helped me to look more critically at the history that is presented to us and the potential interests behind it.

Additionally, it is extraordinary how the topics have spawned, not debates so much, but good conversations rather, despite the differences in ethnicity, upbringing, and philosophy among the participants. This makes me feel it is possible to create a future in which we can transform increasing division into new connections.

## OAKLAND PROJECTS REVISITED

Denise Bowler  
Constituent Museum Curator  
—  
the Whitworth

These projects explore youth voices as constituents. At the Whitworth, we are providing an open platform for Manchester youth.

The Oakland Projects (1991–2001) were a series of installations, performances, and political activist initiatives with young people in Oakland, California started by artist Suzanne Lacy and many Oakland artists. These projects were borne out of a need to address conflict and lack of trust between local youth and several forms of adult authority, from schoolteachers to police officers.

We repurposed The Oakland Projects for a Manchester context working in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University, secondary schools, three FE colleges, and local youth groups.

During February and March 2020, the young co-collaborators explored youth representation in the media. After gaining media literacy skills, the core groups were empowered to take control of their public image. Secondary school students and undergraduates co-developed photography briefs to shift perceptions of youth through portraiture and film. You can read more about this from Alina, Millie, and Saif (page 110).

Since Covid-19, work took place online in place of the studio. In mid-June 2020, we hosted a transatlantic discussion between

students from Manchester and Los Angeles centred around the powerful imagery and photography of Black Lives Matter protests, shared experiences of youth in a global climate, and discussions about race, inequality, and identity. Some of the WYC, who were part of this dialogue are still talking about the contents of the conversation, particularly the fear of being pulled over by the police if a person of colour in America.

Reciprocal relationships have been formed in Oakland Projects Revisited, between young people and the institution. The young people who facilitated the transatlantic conversation, have been commissioned to write copy and design a poster for inter-faith constituent events and edit the film footage from The Oakland Projects Revisited project, with payment for their expertise. I want to work with the graduates when other opportunities arise. The Whitworth can look into kickstarting apprenticeships and entry-level positions to support new graduates wanting to work in and with cultural institutions. We have run Oakland Projects Revisited again this year, working with more young people. Some of those groups approached us such as Youngsters Lives Matter set up by Eugene Sobers. He had recently turned his life around and wanted to inspire other young Mancunians to take that same leap of faith. He looked for examples searching on the internet and stumbled across Suzanne Lacy's The Roof Is On Fire. Blown

away by the process and impact, Eugene approached Suzanne directly who put him in touch with the Whitworth. His group of young people are now working alongside university undergraduates and college students using this platform to make their voices heard to affect real change.

The groups of young people are working collaboratively in a process of social production. They are using strong visual imagery and spoken word to articulate their ideas and what matters to them. A key strand is how places shape young people's identities, as they witness the loss of significant spaces and how regeneration is akin to colonisation. The power is being redistributed through this project. Constituencies are fluid – they grow and change according to need. This example demonstrates a real need, one which is the start of a relationship. Previously the Whitworth would not have been considered a place for those young people. The right door was found and now it's open.

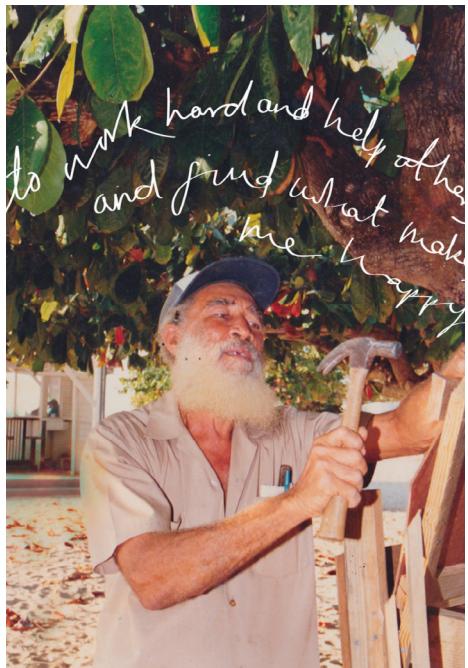
Oakland Projects Revisited is part of the Suzanne Lacy exhibition at the Whitworth, 26 November 2021–10 April 2022, within which young people ask what kind of a city they want Manchester to be and what a manual for social change looks like to them. As part of this project we are collectively developing a visual, media literacy curriculum resource to be disseminated to all schools across the Manchester Cultural Education Partnership (MADE) later this year, enabling students informed control of their futures. Along with the curriculum, we want to strengthen pathways to university working with educational partners and university alumni.

Suzanne Lacy, Unique Holland, and Julio Morales, Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!, Oakland, California, 1997–99.

Photo by Kelli Yon.

Oakland Projects Revisited was inspired by The Oakland Projects (1991–2001) and Code 33 was one of the youth activism projects that took place.







Alistair, an MMU student originally from Oakland, was filmed/interviewed about his views around the differences between racism in the UK and the USA.

Photo: Elise Mhairi Richards



Leonie Brown performing 'Showcase' at a youth event during the opening weekend of Suzanne Lacy's *What kind of city?*, the Whitworth, 27 November 2021. Photo: Elise Mhairi Richards



A three channel video of Oakland Projects Revisited film footage.

Edited by Alina Akbar and Finn Browning  
(MMU Film students + Graduates)



Transatlantic conversation

Transatlantic turning points  
The same world but an ocean apart

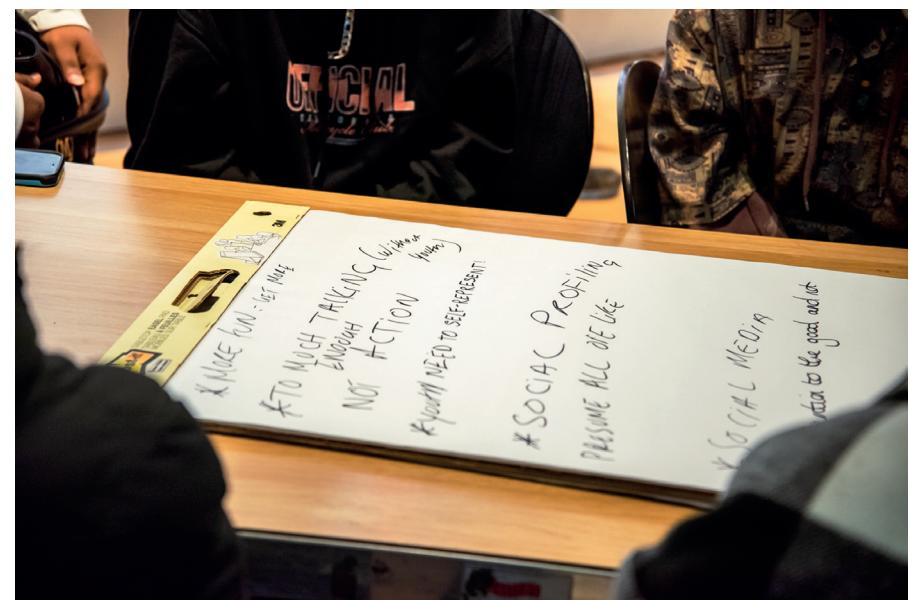
Young participants from Oakland Projects revisited  
hosted a discussion between students from Manchester  
and Los Angeles.

Their shared conversations about the powerful imagery  
and photography of BLM protests, further explore the  
similarities of experiences and feelings of youth within the  
current global climate, leading to in-depth discussions  
about race, inequality, and identity.

Image: Sam McSweeney

Young people's responses to a workshop  
asking What kind of city? (Suzanne Lacy)  
26 November 2021.

Photo: Elise Mhairi Richards





## ALINA'S CHURROS

—  
ALINA AKBAR

The areas of Hulme, Moss Side, and Rusholme were amazing to include in the double exposure portraits. A saying from the City of Amritsar is: 'The best food isn't cooked in peoples homes, you find it on the streets.'

Here's a recipe of the popular Spanish and Mexican Street Food 'churros':

### INGREDIENTS

#### CINNAMON SUGAR COATING

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup caster sugar  
2 tsp ground cinnamon

#### CHURROS

1 cup flour, plain/all purpose  
1 tsp baking powder  
Pinch of salt  
1 tbsp vegetable, canola, or olive oil (not extra virgin olive oil)  
1 cup boiling water  
2 cups vegetable or canola oil, plus a little extra for frying

#### CHOCOLATE SAUCE

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup dark chocolate or semi-sweet chocolate chips  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup double or heavy cream  
Piping bag with an 8 mm or  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch star-tip nozzle

## METHOD

### CINNAMON SUGAR COATING

Combine sugar and cinnamon in a shallow bowl and set aside.

### BATTER

Mix flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl. Add oil and water and mix until just combined – it should be a thick, gummy batter, like a wet sticky dough, not thin and watery.

Transfer dough into a piping bag with an 8 mm or  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch star-tip nozzle.

Set aside while oil heats.

### HEAT OIL

Heat 5 cm or 2 inches of oil over medium high in a small pot, wok or small but deep skillet (Note 3) to 170°C/340°F, or until it takes 20 seconds for a small cube of bread to turn golden.

### PIPE & SNIP

Pipe 15 cm or 6 inch lengths of dough into the oil, snipping with scissors (snip close to oil surface to avoid splash).

Do 3 to 4 per batch, this makes 10 to 12 in total.

Cook for 2-3 minutes or until golden and crisp, rolling occasionally.

Drain: Remove onto paper towel lined plate to drain. Then roll in sugar. Serve hot with Chocolate Sauce!

### CHOCOLATE SAUCE

Place in a heatproof bowl and microwave in 30 second bursts, stirring in between, until smooth. Set aside for 5 minutes to cool and thicken slightly.

## EXPERIENCES OF OAKLAND PROJECTS REVISITED

Alina Akbar

Film Studies Graduate

—

Manchester School of Art

Manchester Metropolitan University

Mohammed Saif Khan

Graphic Design Graduate

—

Manchester School of Art

Manchester Metropolitan University

Oakland Projects Revisited started as a collaborative project among approximately thirty Manchester School of Art University students from a range of arts practices and twenty Manchester Academy High School students from a drama background to produce artwork for the Whitworth Gallery. Suzanne Lacy's initial Oaklands Projects lasted from 1991–2000, which was a collaboration between artists, teachers, and African American youth as a way to hear young people's voices in media, popular culture, and ethnically oriented issues in places where they are usually not given a platform. As a group of university students, we began our project by watching all of the original films and reading into the documentation from the Oaklands Projects, drawing inspiration and educating ourselves on the complexity of social engagement with young people and how to navigate the challenges that come with it.

As a large group we workshopped ideas to build rapport with the high school students at the initial Whitworth meet-up. Our 'Hairy Drawing' activity had the students draw in response to an interviewer's questions about personal journeys. We also tested this among ourselves to get us thinking about the types of questions we could ask mostly in relation to location. This was an easy and subtle way to begin

to find information – including what the students wanted from the project and their visual styles – without being intrusive and given it was a collaboration. At the next meet we conducted workshops in smaller groups such as a 'Loop Poetry' activity to encourage the students to speak about themselves with prompts like 'My area' and 'I am'. After this the groups pitched photoshoot ideas to the students, allowing them to choose the styles they wanted to try. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 lockdown meant we were unable to meet again and carry out the final photoshoot. The students had been really interested in double exposure photography combining areas with portraits, and working around Covid constraints we managed to create double exposure images using Google Maps and workshop footage.

In the weeks that followed the completion of the unit X project and the development of the degree show globally we saw the resurgence of Black Lives Matter movement and its protests following the wrongful killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. As people took to the streets around the globe to voice their frustration and disgust many of us embarked upon personal journeys of learning and reflection. For large proportions of society, mainly white individuals, there was an intense period of learning and self-challenging the likes

of which many of the youth had never witnessed. However, these conversations left people with a multitude of questions that facilitated the continuation of desperately needed societal discussions. In the light of the recent events and inspired by the works of Suzanne Lacy a select few students began organising and hosting a transcontinental discussion whereby students from Manchester would engage with students from Los Angeles assisted by doctoral candidate Charli Kemp. The discussion took on topics such as privilege and society's detrimental views – experiences within education systems that have allowed for a comparison and exploration of commonalities of experiences that occur across both continents. Tokenism and performative allyship were later discussed within a wider analysis of organisations and their contributions to societal inequality. Despite time constraints the discussion was an overwhelmingly positive experience for those involved as it provided a safe space for topics to be discussed and even debated.

Alongside the discussion an illustrator produced live illustrations from the call depicting both participants and their thoughts on topics being discussed. Both the transcontinental discussion and the illustrations were to be used to launch the wider social media campaign #oaklandrevisited.

Once launched the campaign looked to the local communities to engage and participate, people were invited to explore how the clothing they wear can represent both their identities but also carry and combat assumptions and stereotypes. This was based on one of the proposed photoshoots that the students were hoping to explore. Participants were asked to send in photos of an item of clothing alongside text about the story behind it and what they wished the world knew about them when they wore it.



## SAIF'S FRUIT SALAD

—  
MOHAMMED SAIF KHAN

### INGREDIENTS

½ a pineapple  
1 ripe mango  
1 papaya  
2 kiwi fruit  
½ a lime  
½ a bunch of fresh mint (15 g)  
2 tbsp golden caster sugar  
200 g yoghurt

### METHOD

Trim the outside skin off the pineapple and cut out the hard core that runs down its centre. Lay it on a chopping board and cut it into chunks with a sharp knife. Place in a bowl.

Cut the flesh of the mango off the stone and scoop out the flesh from the skin with a spoon. Place into the bowl with the pineapple. Cut the papaya in half and scoop out the black seeds inside. Scoop the fruit out of the skin in the same way as with the mango. Place into the bowl. Top and tail the kiwi fruit, then, sitting it on one of its flat ends, trim the furry skin off with a sharp knife. Slice the kiwi and place into the bowl. Squeeze the lime juice over your fruit.

Working with the ethnically diverse groups of students and witnessing how their interactions can build bridges between communities and educate one another was a beautiful sight to see and experience. An experience that reminds me of my own research and views of assimilation and the merging of communities within Manchester.

To many people assimilation can be seen as the systematic purging of difference, the relinquishing of all prior ties to heritage related elements of identity.

‘Think fruit salad, rather than melting pot: Each ingredient keeps its flavour, even as it mixes with others.’

The above quote perfectly summarises the beauty of integration in comparison to the bleak reality of assimilation. A reality where social cohesion is possible and led by respect, love, and understanding of one another. A reality that I believe this project helped both the students and Manchester take a step towards.

Take four plates and divide the fruit between them. Pick the mint leaves and pound most of them with the sugar in a pestle and mortar or a flavour shaker. Spoon a little yoghurt over the top of each plate and sprinkle over the mint sugar and the rest of the mint leaves and serve.



Image: Mohammed Saif Khan

MMU Art & Design students proposed a social media campaign that would enable young people to reclaim their identity, using a combination of clothing and language to reflect their individuality



UNFAMILIAR  
COMMUNITIES  
CASSEROLE  
—  
MILLIE THROP

Ingredients for 10 people:

1 x open-mind  
1 pack of willing collaborators  
(of your choice)  
1 heaped tbsp of genuine relationships  
3 garlic cloves  
1 ounce of authenticity (for garnish)  
5 baking potatoes  
2 x 400 g cans of chopped tomatoes

In this easy and delicious casserole recipe, timing is key. Don't be tempted to rush any of the steps as this may cause your casserole to lack in flavour. Enjoy the process.

METHOD

Starting with your open mind, begin to familiarise yourself with your group of collaborators. Note: this relationship will build throughout the process, be patient or this will prevent your casserole from thickening.

Place your open mind in an oven-proof casserole dish. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees (160 fan). Ask your collaborators what prep work they would like to do. Some should chop and peel the potatoes; others should finely chop the garlic cloves while the final group combine the developing relationships with the chopped tomatoes. Make sure everybody has a job and that they are happy with it.

Once all of your potatoes are peeled and chopped, add these to the dish with your open mind. Ask some of the collaborators to evenly distribute these in the dish while others slowly fold in the chopped tomatoes. Finally, layer the garlic cloves over the top of the tomatoes and give everything a good mix up.

Note: if your genuine relationships do not seem to be mixing in with the rest of the ingredients, these will slowly expand by the time you come to serve, trust the process. Make sure that everyone has had a go at mixing the ingredients before finally giving someone the responsibility of placing the lid on the dish. Now ask if anyone would like to assist while placing the dish in the oven.

Now that your casserole will need to cook for 45 minutes on your low oven setting, use this time wisely. This is the perfect opportunity to build on the team work you have experienced so far. You could use this time to clear up and set the

table for your dinner, encouraging your collaborators to discuss how they have felt the process has gone so far and if they are looking forward to seeing the finished result.

Although this recipe does not mention many spices, ask your collaborators how they like their casseroles, do they have any family recipes? Allow your collaborators to discuss between themselves and do not pressure anyone to speak up if they don't want to. If anything alternative to this recipe comes up, you can remove the dish half way through cooking and make your additional touches.

By the time that the casserole has finished cooking, check on it and see if you feel that it has thickened to your liking. This is a recipe of negotiation so ensure that you are not tempted to take control, you may be hungry but it is worth taking the extra time to ensure a delicious casserole is served.

Once it has been decided that the casserole is ready, call on the help of your collaborators to serve equal portions, finally garnishing the dish with the all important ounce of authenticity, this should complete the process perfectly.

Now, sit and enjoy the product of your hard work, negotiation and the relationships that have developed as a result!



# CONVERSATIONS

*What kind of conversations do we want?*

*Do we want to change our language?*

ANTI-RACISM GROUP:  
SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS  
Dazrene Ohiri

TRANSCRIPT FROM  
A WALK IN THE PARK PODCAST  
Francine Hayfron,  
Dominique Heyse Moore  
and Alistair Hudson

CONSTITUENT RECIPES  
Hilde van der Heijden

## ANTI-RACISM GROUP: SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

Dazrene Ohiri

Visitor Team Assistant  
—  
the Whitworth

We now reign in a new era of change. Change can happen as quick as a flash of lightning or as slow as a tortoise. It has happened and it will happen. The process is one in which we are partakers, be it physically, emotionally, or verbally. If we employ one or all of these, a shift in perception takes place in the institution.

So, I'm here at the Whitworth. We now have an Anti-Racism Group (ARG) that gives a collective voice concerning shifting perceptions from within. It brings a collective voice to the mission and vision statement and code of conduct for the gallery. Those entering the gallery will be visually presented with the code of conduct, in which they may have to accept a challenge in their behaviour towards the space, exhibition, and those who work there.

The ARG is finding its feet, shifting perceptions a little further with training around race diversity, and language. To actually think, speak, and give change to language is a step, a step to help staff consider how to change, to think, to see, and to speak and shift their perceptions. We hope to see some of the uncomfortableness removed and a new way of talking and working evolve. It's important and I feel it necessary to keep this process going now that those conversations have taken place, with more to come. If we are to truly progress then these conversations are here to stay. There will be times we get to decide at what pace, then there are times life will do it on its own. Let's just keep

talking to make sure the shift continues and change happens.

This shift also speaks of how we are as an art gallery. So many other galleries and museums around the world are now looking at their collections with a changed lens and an emphasis on de-colonisation – what does it mean and what kind of change is needed? Conversations are taking place about their collections, in terms of how works were acquired, the ethics behind artworks, and where the diversity is and how it got there. If artists are under-represented, then how do we get to find out about them and acquire their artworks if they want to be part of a collection? This has to be a continuous process. As within the arts many conversations have now come to the forefront, more so than before 2020, the shift of perception in itself is being seen, felt, and spoken about globally. With the exhibitions this presence shows this priority is felt on a global level. Those engaging with the arts have seen that conscious change happen and demonstrated in their viewpoints through conversations.

Another shift that has taken place is within the VTAs (Visitor Team Assistants) at the Whitworth. We have carried out research on the topic of black lives and shared information on all things black and the effects on individuals, groups, societies, and the nation with all their implications. At one time, all this would have just passed the team by and would not have been

visible to all, or maybe visible, but never with a platform for those to feel that they can have discussions with brown people and put their thoughts and feelings into spoken words. This has revealed how awake everyone is to these issues and experiences. It's impacted everyone.

Let's talk beyond BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). BAME in whatever context it exists. Being part of the University of Manchester, I was aware there was a BAME network group, but I was not sure of the purpose it served or whether in this day and age, if this network group should even exist – especially using the term 'BAME'. However, it exists. I question how much impact, power, or change it has affected or how far out it reached, then to now, within the university context prior to the plight of George Floyd. I am personally yet to discover this impact.

In truth, the fact that the BAME network continues to exist leaves me with mixed feelings. The terminology and intentions feel outdated. It doesn't help to open up conversations and continue the shift in people's perceptions. This is something I want to change. Since writing this the University of Manchester has rejected the term BAME. The BAME network group hasn't yet amended their documents or come up with a new term.

The Whitworth has started to use the term 'Global Majority' instead of BAME or people of colour. This came from a

conversation with the University of Manchester's Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE (Race Archives and Community Engagement) Centre during Anti-Racism Training for Whitworth staff. The centre is a specialist archive focusing on the study of race, migration, and ethnic diversity. They work closely with communities across Greater Manchester. Their preference is to ask participants how they would describe themselves and if this option is not available, they use the term 'Global Majority'.

The Whitworth has recently set up an anti-racist protocol for Anti-Racism Action as outlined here:

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO ANTI-RACIST ACTION

The Whitworth is a gallery for everybody. We know that our foundations were built via systems of imperialism and capitalism through industry and colonial exploitation. With that divisions in class, labour, race, and gender escalated. We do not shy away from that past but instead we actively and continuously confront it so that we can give a voice to all those who have not been heard. We value your thoughts, your voice, your opinion. We are listening and we hear what you tell us.

Then follows a section of the website with space to find and explore the ongoing work the gallery does to create positive actions in culture to end racism in all forms. This work is not confined to this space but permeates all our work as we use art in the world to make it a better place. For this we should be held accountable to our staff, visitors, volunteers, and working partners. The Whitworth's Anti-Racism Group exists in order to ensure this happens. There are web links, reading lists, and other useful anti-racism material updated regularly with ongoing work.

Along with ARG Action [13], all Whitworth staff have been invited to anti-racism training. There are three different approaches offered through the training that give us all a chance to explore racism from different perspectives.

The ARG is our step forward at the Whitworth along with the decolonisation of the collection. There's still a long way to go. If we work together as a whole gallery and commit to that change, we can make the right changes that stay and move the institution along.

13 — View more about the Whitworth's anti-racism protocol at:  
<https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/about/antiracistaction>

## TRANSCRIPT FROM A WALK IN THE PARK PODCAST

### — EPISODE 4

Francine Hayfron

Cultural Park Keeper

—  
the Whitworth

Dominique Heyse Moore

Head of Collections & Exhibitions

—  
the Whitworth

Alistair Hudson

Director

—  
Manchester Art Gallery  
and the Whitworth

In this episode, I want to highlight issues around the Black Lives Matter Movement. I'm a black lady in my early forties in a relatively senior position as Cultural Park Keeper at the Whitworth Art Gallery and the idea of using this podcast as a vehicle came as I was digesting the news around the Black Lives Matter Movement... people were pointing their finger at institutions like ours to say what are you doing? How many black people have you got in your leadership team and what are your views towards Black Lives Matter?

I felt like I almost couldn't respond with a clear answer. Yes, the Whitworth probably has many things it needs to do to make the Whitworth a better organisation for people of colour, but at the same time we're really doing some great stuff and maybe the problem lies in the fact that we don't shout loud enough... maybe we should be better at demonstrating that there are people like me who work at the gallery.

This podcast is rooted in those ideas and in this part of the debate I wanted to bring in two of my colleagues from the leadership team at the Whitworth. So, I grabbed a Zoom call, who doesn't these days, with

Alistair Hudson, Director of the Whitworth and Dominique Heyse-Moore, who is our Head of Collections & Exhibitions. This ended up being a fascinating interview in that it revealed our different routes into the art sector, our differing abilities to take risks when following a career in the arts, and a shared desire to see change.

So, I thought maybe a really good starting point for today could be talking about our individual journeys to the Whitworth and with working within the museum and galleries sector as I am sure that the three of us have very different stories to tell. Maybe, I can put the question to you Dominique, how you came to the Whitworth and working in your role.

**DHM:** I am a mixed black and white East Asian woman. I am forty. I feel that I need to tell people quite a long story about how I came to the Whitworth because race has informed so much of my career in this sector and also coming into this particular role.

A long time ago I studied Art History and then a few years later I did an MA in the History of Design and while I was doing that I

ended up working on race specifically. I was looking at dress in the nineteenth century in Trinidad and the Caribbean more widely – thinking about the racial categorisations that were quite complex at that time in the British colony and how those related to dress. On the back of that, I came as a curatorial trainee to live in Manchester. The project I was working on as a trainee was called Revealing Histories, and this was across many museums and galleries in Manchester, but I was particularly focusing on working across Manchester Museum of Science & Industry, the People's History Museum, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester Museum, and the Whitworth.

I was a Positive Action Trainee, which means that I was recruited partly on the basis of race, but also brought in specifically as I had looked at the history of slavery quite a lot – transatlantic slavery – during my MA. I tell that story as obviously there are links between my identity and what I have worked on and my area of expertise has been informed by my racialised background. After I did the traineeship, which was two years long, a job appeared at the Whitworth as an Assistant Curator. So, I applied for that and got it. I'd say that was to do with the traineeship and very much to do with my History of Design background. I was the Assistant Curator of Textiles and Wallpaper and then worked for a few years at the gallery.

I came back to my current role at the gallery two and a half years ago as a Head of Collections & Exhibitions and I came to that very much knowing the gallery and it was appealing to return in a more senior role. An important thing for me to describe is that with the responsibility for the textiles collection, I really look after the parts

of the collection that can be described as ethnographic with all of the problems of that term. It's the part of the collection that is often described as the world collection – most parts of the world are represented by that collection, that means that it has a very problematic relationship to colonialism.

**AH:** Out of interest, what was the driver behind your decision making, prior to a life of art and design?

**DHM:** I went to a lot of exhibitions with my white grandmother who was an artist. There were even times where I felt comfortable in that setting, it was prescribed by my racial identity.

**AH:** Yes, reflecting on my formative years, I got into art because I liked it and I was good at it, and like you I was surrounded by a family who went to see churches, art galleries, and National Trust properties – all very English, middle-class, white things to do. And for someone like me to take a step into the art world, although it's not a 'normal' career... you feel it is somehow a luxurious position to be in, that you can take the risk of going into a career in art that doesn't necessarily have a secure future. Maybe I am projecting, but in a way, this is almost where some of this starts as well – that I have the luxury, the comfort of knowing that I will have family support or a fall-back position or another way to make it in the world. A kind of confidence that everything will work out okay.

**DHM:** I think the decision to have a career or to aim to have a career in the sector only came when that traineeship was advertised and so you know these types of diversity positive action schemes have been very

problematic and there have been lots of reviews looking at these historic schemes, but that was the point where I felt – that's two years of security. I've always been conscious about going into something where most of the people I had studied with, intended to work for free for a long period of time. I feel like I wouldn't have confidence in that decision before despite my comfort in that setting.

Though I have criticisms and those schemes are very complicated, I have never felt more racialised than I did when I was Positive Action Trainee or as I was sometimes introduced as a PAT. You know I would sometimes be taken around, as I worked in five different institutions, I would be taken around and shown off. I find it interesting that it was the thing that enabled me to work in the sector but is also the thing that has made it most problematic and most interesting in another way. There's something to challenge, which has kept me here despite many significant moments of doubt along the way.

**FH:** Alistair can you take us a few steps back into your journey? You were raised with this interest in the arts, but when you came into the sector what did you want to do?

**AH:** I didn't know. I studied History of Art and Fine Art. In a way I liked both and I kept trying to do both. I still imagine that I am doing both. I think that path I had taken was a slightly more maverick one. Certainly, the Art History path. I had a more influential tutor named Sarat Maharaj, who was Indian originally and had a very complex and interesting life, but was a key voice about anti-colonialism in the art world, fighting against the

Western-centric vision of art. People like that were very influential in my thinking. I knew I didn't want to take a traditional route. So really after that I considered doing an MA but then it wasn't fashionable. There was this mentality around Goldsmiths, University of London, that you went out and became an artist, where you made shows or set up a gallery, and so I followed a trajectory like that of trying to do things on my own. To make things meet, I got a job in a commercial gallery in London, the Anthony D'Offay Gallery, which was then the blue chip, international shop for very expensive art, selling paintings, sculptures, and installations to museums and the wealthy people of the world. I did that for seven years and that was quite formative in seeing how the art world is constructed, how it's made, and how it works, how power and money are very important in order to shape and control, and often people who acquire this art do it for a love of art. This established my thinking about how you could make another version of art that was for more people.

After that, I went to work for the Government Art Collection, commissioning artists to make art for different government buildings in London and Westminster, but also internationally in embassies and consulates. We were representing Britain through art as a political tool. It turned the screw in another direction in terms of thinking and I ran a residency programme in the Lake District, which was at a time when I was against institutions.

The future lay in small subversive acts or artists working in everyday life, because I was quite interested in how you could pull apart this Euro-centric, white version of what art was and open up art to be a much

more interesting, expansive thing it really is in different cultures and societies. I went on the back of that to Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art.

[Continues here...](#)

<https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/learn/outdoors/awalkinthepark/>

It was an opportunity to try out all this thinking at a museum. The challenge was: Could a museum that had been built showing the great and good determined by art world consensus, do something else? In other words, could a gallery have another role other than showing art that had been agreed by the art world as good, operate in another way? The people in Middlesbrough didn't see eye to eye with it. What I tried to do was to change the way that museum worked by being relevant to people and talking to people, working with the people that lived around the museum to define what it was. That ended up being a rich and diverse programme. I then got tapped for a job coming up at the Whitworth. It was the ultimate challenge as it's a big, big institution, but in a city, a city that I come from, that I had criticisms of growing up. This was an opportunity to change it. We're in that process of change now and pressures of change to diversify what art is and what it means to people. Basically, to encourage people to accept it, understand it, and use it, so that it has value in their lives rather than to just a narrow band of society.

## CONSTITUENT RECIPES

**Hilde van der Heijden**

Project Coordinator Mediation

—

Van Abbemuseum

**Jeroen van der Wegen**

Community Artist

—

Woonbedrijf, Eindhoven

**Donica Buisman**

Founder and Managing Director

—

Raum, Utrecht

**Anne de Haij**

Strategic Advisor

—

Kunstmuseum, The Hague

**Van Abbemuseum programme coordinator and educator**  
Hilde van der Heijden carried out interviews throughout the Constituent Museum Project discussing constituent practice in terms constructing a successful recipe for working with people.

## INTERVIEW WITH JEROEN VAN DER WEGEN

In the summer of 2020, Hilde van der Heijden talked with Jeroen van der Wegen at Woonbedrijf, Eindhoven, about the importance of community-focused work.

### WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF SHARING ART AND CULTURE OWNERSHIP IN THE CITY?

I worked in the Communication Department of Woonbedrijf for years, which is one of the largest housing corporations in Eindhoven. During this time, I was indirectly involved in co-creation and social design projects in neighbourhoods. I also led co-creation processes for new housing projects.

### IF THERE WERE A RECIPE FOR CO-OWNERSHIP IN THE ART AND CULTURE SECTOR, WHICH 'DISH' COMES TO MIND?

'Woensel Supertoll' is a very nice example. In Woensel Supertoll, local residents created a swirling spinning topesque construction from slats of wood, together with an artist. Inspired by Rapper Fresku, the board featured texts about the residents' motivations and ambitions.

### WHY IS 'WOENSEL SUPERTOLL' A SUCCESSFUL RECIPE?

Because it came from the people themselves. They said what they wanted, had fun, and were proud of it. We did it together.

### AND WHAT ARE THE MAIN INGREDIENTS FOR A SUPERTOLL?

1. An eager artist with the ability to address and enthuse people in the street. Tijs Rooijakkers, for example, is a sympathetic and curious person who enjoys working with people.

2. Partners who are integrated in neighbourhoods. Woonbedrijf, for example, works with senior customer managers who are in the neighbourhoods every day. Everyone knows them. They know who they can involve in a project and how and they also understand what doesn't work.

3. People who work with their heart.

### WHAT ARE THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR 'SPACES'?

1. A mix of people with different perspectives who work together on something. When we started designing 'Space S' we had all kinds of people at the table. Once we had a student sitting at a table with an older man who argued for rules, agreements, and control. The student wanted freedom and happiness. They eventually came to an agreement since the elder man no longer wanted to be tucked away in a complex with peers his age and the student wanted to learn something from an experienced elder.

2. A common interest. All the people who participated in the 'Space-S' neighbourhood wanted to live there.

3. Give space to the interests of a group. Once, we were working together with a family whose daughter was neurodiverse, and was able to live independently on her own. The parents were looking for other parents with similar children, which led to a group that thinks about care facilities for assisted living for young people.

### HOW DOES A PARTY LIKE WOONBEDRIJF APPROACH THESE 'INGREDIENTS'?

Our motto is 'know your residents'. In each district we have a 'neighbourhood manager' who works closely with a technical specialist for repairs and other similar activities. Together, they are the ears and eyes of the neighbourhood. Someone like Johan van de Sanden, who is a neighbourhood manager in Tongelre, is there every day. Previously he was a plasterer. Now he makes vlogs about the neighbourhood putting people in the spotlight that he admires. Jan, eighty years old, clears waste lying around in the neighbourhood every morning before dawn. You must facilitate and support your neighbourhood ambassador. Often you can increase what they already do on their own initiative with a small investment. At the Coevering flats in Geldrop, Wilitha who had been distributing coffee to residents with a simple jug got her own coffee cart.

### HOW CAN OUR MUSEUM INCREASE CO-CREATION AND CO-OWNERSHIP?

I think the museum should be allowed to go outside more and to be present in the neighbourhood. If people don't come to you,

you can bring art to them. There isn't much interest in art and culture in the construction and project developers world. I have always tried to bring art closer to my own colleagues and residents. When the new office for Woonbedrijf was built, I hung poems by one of Eindhoven's poets, Merel Morre, in the stairwells so that people could see art every day. Art on construction fences is another great example. When the new Havenhof complex was built, we placed art by local artist Johan Moorman on the construction fence.

## INTERVIEW WITH DONICA BUISMAN

Since 2016, Donica Buisman, founder and managing director of RAUM in Utrecht, a design institution known for its participatory approach and open and flat hierarchies, has developed a place and a programme with the principal of using art and design to create cities together with users. In early July 2020, Hilde van der Heijden called Buisman to talk about participation, constituencies, and the transformative work at RAUM.

### YOUR RECIPE FOR CO-OWNERSHIP IN ART AND CULTURE COULD BE CALLED 'CREATIVE PLACEMAKING'. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS IDEA?

In the beginning, I was always asked: 'What is your vision for this district?' I would say: 'I have no idea. Can I first observe and talk to the residents and entrepreneurs?' That is what characterises 'creative placemaking'. The term comes from the 'Project for Public Spaces' movement in New York.

First, you go out on the street and start talking to people. Then you map the environment to understand who lives, works, and shares knowledge in the area. Based on this you put together a diverse group of representatives consisting preferably of 50% residents and welfare workers and 50% professionals on (city) design and art.

The best example from my own practice is the Buikslotermeerplein in Amsterdam where we gathered a group of twenty very different people and organisations who discussed what should be done with the area. This allowed us to develop activities that fairly quickly evolved into a design study.

### WHAT DRIVES YOU PERSONALLY?

I think that people are not sufficiently involved in their city. I want to contribute to urban developments with residents and area users. During my time at Nighttown in Rotterdam, I realised that cultural institutions often have little contact with their environment. Back then my inspiration came from the streets, where there were lots of different people with diverse backgrounds and nationalities. This is where I started to work in this way and embrace the bases of a 'creative placemaking' approach.

We are here in RAUM [14], a site 'from and for the city' in Utrecht Leidsche Rijn, a completely new district. Here you have also worked with creative placemaking. What is the goal and when is it a success?

At RAUM the aim is to develop a place where residents can make structural contributions to urban topics, with art and design manifestations. The city only belongs to everyone if everyone can participate in it. In recent years we have organised more than sixteen co-creation sessions with about 1000 participants. We are now initiating the 'RAUM Lab' with twenty residents, makers, educational institutions, and companies to discuss urban themes and 'the economically unequal city'.

### WHICH 'INGREDIENTS' ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF PLACES LIKE RAUM?

Hospitality and vibrancy are very decisive. You need different people from different backgrounds that want to think and participate and can contribute to a 'swarm' or 'collective' intelligence. Our basis is research by design, which is why we call ourselves a design institution. We strive for quality and want designers and artists who are original. Renowned names are less important to us. The point is that they can contribute to the making of the city, together with the environment.

### COULD YOU ALSO SAY, THE MUSEUM ONLY BELONGS TO EVERYONE IF EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE IN IT? AND HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

First of all, you have to make your own organisation diverse and use collective intelligence in your work processes. If you want to contribute to the city through art, you need different angles to come together. How else can you create a diverse programme? Here at RAUM we are with a small organisation and networking is the basis. When we hire new people we also look at what kind of 'angles' and diversity in background we already have in the team. This is the base for looking for new blood that can contribute to the 'collective intelligence' of the team as a whole. This also means we often don't go for the obvious candidate.

For example, we hired an IT specialist as a manager for rentals who lived in Leidsche Rijn and had a bi-cultural background instead of somebody who already had a lot of experience but didn't bring a different point of view to the team. Incidentally,

this is not only about diversity, but also about 'island thinking'. We also embarked on reforming our own organisation, under the guidance of organisation experts and coaches Daan Fousert and Pauline van der Lee.

We no longer work with departments, but from people's intrinsic motivations. We ask colleagues which project appeals to them, why, and what they would like to do. I would also start in this way with your museum. Form new teams for each exhibition, ensure that your organisation is diverse and explore your neighbourhood, because everyone you need will be there.

### DO YOU MEAN A NEIGHBOURS' DINNER, FOR EXAMPLE?

Yes, why not! But it is important to consider how you approach your neighbourhood. You can invite people from the neighbourhood by sending them a simple letter, but if you really want to build a network, you have to go into the neighbourhood and talk to the local hairdresser or café owner, for example. Make sure you really speak to people and invite them personally. You also want to chat with some of them alone to be sure that all sorts of pain points are exposed. Only then can you really understand what people think of the museum.

### WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF HAVING A DIVERSE TEAM?

A good example is all the attention around the Black Lives Matter movement. Of course, I initially also thought we should post a black box on our Instagram feed. But the people with a bi-cultural background in my team said 'no, let's not do that since it

means so little to us.' We chose not to go along with what many other institutions did. I'm not saying that organisations who did post a black box shouldn't have done that, the point is that you really search your motives and use the diversity of your team to come up with the best approach for you.

#### AND WHAT DID YOU DO INSTEAD?

We opted for something real, true for our own organisation. I asked my team: 'Are we doing enough with diversity themes? Should we, for example, make an exhibition about diversity? Should we include the colonial past as a subject?' The response was that we shouldn't name it specifically but propagate diversity throughout our programme, organisation, and communication. Then it becomes the natural part of the organisation that it should be.

#### WHICH LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED AT RAUM?

We can still do so much better! It's very difficult, for example, to establish a real bond with local residents. We organised 16 experience dinners with over 1000 participants in 2 years to hear what the neighbourhood had to say, but we can still do much better in keeping everyone informed and doing something with all the input we get.

We also often speak the language we are used to speaking, which means that we quickly opt for a white angle. Just the word exhibition, for example, doesn't work for everyone. Descriptions for installations are sometimes too difficult and abstract. In the menu of our neighbourhood restaurant, we chose not to use words like 'blanched'

or 'candied' since it is initially a meeting place and not a Michelin star restaurant.

#### HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE TOPIC OF INEQUALITY IN THE CITY?

It's a very current topic that we would like to explore more, but it is also very comprehensive and complex. We are starting with desk research exploring questions such as: What aspects does this subject contain? What have sociologists explored? And we're also initiating discussions with a diverse group via RAUM Lab. The 'Department of Extraordinary Affairs' is currently helping us in the design process.

### INTERVIEW WITH ANNE DE HAIJ

After working in several departments of the Kunstmuseum Den Haag for six years, Anne de Hajj became the board member advising on its policy and strategy initiating numerous projects that affect how the museum is polyphonic, including the Advisory Council. From February 2021, De Hajj is the director of Stedelijk Museum Schiedam in Rotterdam.

#### WHY WAS THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ESTABLISHED?

The management teams and directors were not immediately interested in an Advisory Council. The biggest criticism was that something like this has to grow from bottom-up initiatives and you cannot impose it, but I think it should be propagated by management. We started with a conversation with the directors and the management team about why we want to do this. Is it because the Hague is a city with a lot of nationalities, but also segregated and as an institution we want to contribute to an open inclusive society? Or is the reason that we want to make money by increasing our visitor numbers? Or are there other values that we think are important? In this discussion, we concluded that the social value is what is central for us.

Looking closer at the dimensions of diversity you find of gender, social, ethnicity, cultural, age. Because we cannot do everything at once, we decided that as an organisation, we want to be more ethnically culturally diverse. The Dutch Code of Cultural Diversity advises that diversity should be considered within Employees, Audience, Programme, and Partners. Employees became one of the main focuses for us.

As a next step, I had a 'zero measurement' performed to understand who is currently in the organisation. This measurement gave a lot of insight: 25% of our colleagues had a non-Western background. However, the directors' board consisted of only white men, as well as the artistic management team, whereas the management team at the time consisted of eight white people of which two were female.

This resulted in several actions. Firstly the composition of the management team changed: another female with a non-Western migration background and I joined. We started looking at how we recruit; copywriters were trained and our vacancy descriptions were adapted. We reviewed and adjusted all quality criteria; a curator no longer needs to have completed an art history study, for example, and we have applied the Rooney's rule: there must always be two people with a non-Western background and/or from a minority group in every meeting. Additionally, we have taken a close look at our freelancers; contracting designers or writers through non-white agencies is preferred. But, things didn't go fast enough for me and I felt that in the higher employee positions no other perspectives had entered the organisation. As long as we are predominantly white and

14 — <https://raumutrecht.nl/>

male, big decisions and changes cannot be made. And so the idea for the Advisory Council was born – to bring in diverse perspectives from outside.

I received support from an external consultant, Umar Mirza, who guided three sessions with the management team to define exactly what this Advisory Council should do and who should be in it. He had some creative ways to guide these conversations that I experienced as very valuable.

We used targeted channels and our network to recruit members and specifically looked beyond people of colour because we wanted to approach the search with a broad idea of diversity. It was a challenge, but it worked out reasonably well and we received no less than 600 responses!

#### CAN THE ADVISORY COUNCIL INITIATE THEIR OWN PROJECTS?

The Advisory Council provides input on various major topics and processes inside the organisation such as: How do we implement more inclusive employee policies? How can we reach a younger audience? How do we turn our sponsors into partners? For the time being, we have three meetings per year, each with their own subject. We just started before Covid-19 with a kick-off meeting to introduce and clarify the tasks and agenda of the council in January 2020.

The second meeting took place in September 2020 and in between the members of our Advisory Council participated in smaller brainstorms on specific topics. Six members participated in two sessions organised by our marketing department, concerning the participation of

communities in public programmes. Three of the members met with our Head of Human Resources in December 2020 to discuss how to become a more inclusive organisation. We always try to combine the larger Advisory Council meetings with a dinner and an introduction by our director Benno who shares something about upcoming exhibitions and projects.

In future, I would also like to further discuss broader topics with the Advisory Council such as the programming, reputation, and image our institution has. Especially the programme remains a sensitive topic, as counsellors have no artistic background. So for now it remains an advisory council, but I can imagine that in the future members can throw in their own ideas and initiate processes.

#### WHAT ELSE DO YOU SEE AS LEADING EXAMPLES IN YOUR INSTITUTION IN TERMS OF POLYPHONY AND INCLUSION?

I don't think it's leading because we've been doing it for ten years, but I think our city districts project was our first step towards inclusion. This arose from the thought that only a certain type of person enters the museum; white, highly educated, usually from the Randstad, Brabant, or Gelderland and very often female. We went into neighbourhoods to tell them how great the museum was, which obviously wasn't successful and so we started looking for ambassadors who were involved in the neighbourhoods.

We got to know people who had their own networks in the neighbourhood, working in community centres or libraries, for example. The city district programme officer set up a programme for these ambassadors

with free entrance and guided tours just for them to familiarise themselves with our institution. Ultimately this evolved into district evenings organised every month and where each district has its own evening at the museum.

Prior to these evenings smaller events are hosted within the neighbourhood. All visitors have free entry and access to transportation. There are short tours and music from the neighbourhood. The visitors also get vouchers to come back with friends or family. This programme has been a big part of our budget for the past years and has been very successful with up to 1000 people attending such evenings. We have noticed that only 10% visit us again on their own later, but that is because they prefer city district events and because they see it as their annual museum outing.

#### HOW DOES INCLUSION STAY ON THE AGENDA?

By making inclusion a standard element of all meetings and processes and looking at it from a structural level. Not everyone expects it to move forward. Some people find it a difficult subject and some find it tiring.

We offer training courses such as bias training, but I don't want to offer more than two per year. We have not made it compulsory, but we strongly advise our employees to participate. An inclusive language and text training was planned in the spring, but we had to move it. This was intended for anyone who writes, for both internal and external communication resources. The training courses serve different goals but ensure that we are all involved at all levels.

I think a diversity manager would also help, but unfortunately we do not have the means for that. I wouldn't want that title, because I don't think the job should be done by a highly educated white woman.

#### DO YOU THINK THE ADVISORY COUNCIL SHOULD INTERVENE IN THE PROGRAMMING AND EXHIBITIONS OF THE MUSEUM?

That is a tricky one since I think the Advisory Council is not sufficiently involved in the museum yet. The exhibitions and programmes are after all the holy grail of the museum and as such the hardest part to change. The Cultural Diversity Code is a good tool for me here, and I want to improve on all of their guidelines, especially on Programme and Public. By building trust between the Advisory Council and the people in the institution, I think it's possible for everyone to share openly about the topics you care most for.

#### HOW DO YOU REWARD THE MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL?

They are paid for preparing and attending per meeting, with a sort of attendance fee. It is important that they feel that they get something in return and that they are not only a service of the museum. A salary would not be appropriate and they don't want that since they are all people who find it valuable to be involved in the museum. The money is secondary for them.

# IT'S ONLY WORDS...

*What on earth  
does 'constituent'  
mean?*

WORDS CHANGE WORLDS  
Rivca Rubin and Charles Lauder

THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN  
CONSTITUENT-LED PRACTICE:  
A COMPANION PIECE ABOUT  
LANGUAGE  
Denise Bowler

(UN)DEFINING QUEER  
Dominic Bilton

Do you understand what  
constituent means?

Do we want to change our use  
of language?

Do we want to shift from Euro-  
centric, heterogeneous focus  
to use more intersectional language?

Words that reflect our city.

If the terminology has to be  
explained to our gallery staff,  
are they the right words to use  
with our local communities?

It's not about generalising...  
it's about being understood.

# Words Create Worlds and Words Change Worlds... mine – yours – ours!

## WORDS CHANGE WORLDS

Rivca Rubin

Upwording Practice,  
Facilitating & Coaching,  
Organisational Development

Charles Lauder

Organisational Development  
Consultant, Executive Coach  
Film, TV and Theatre Director

Upwording, began in 2016, initiated by Rivca Rubin, and over the past four years, has been developed with various fellow thinkers and practitioners, particularly Charles Lauder. Upwording has been tested with live translations into several languages in many countries with a huge variety of communities, and the positive impact on people's lives at home and at work has been significant. Upwording has its roots in Non-Violent Communication and draws on a variety of linguistic and behavioural science studies and methodologies, creating an accessible practice to address (undress) unhelpful, hindering language habits, making small shifts to seismic impacts.

The way we think and behave is shaped by our language choices and, in this symbiotic relationship, the reverse also applies. Similarly, how we speak to and about ourselves and others shape the relationships we create and maintain.

The desire for a change in the way language is used is self-evident. There's the move away from the binary pronouns he/she. There's the growing desire to discard acronyms or labels that indiscriminately group individuals, for example, regarding ability, ethnicity/race, or sex/sexuality without accurate reference to differences that are important to people's lived experiences. These are indicative of

an increasing aspiration for language to reflect and respect variety. Upwording not only embraces this appetite for change, it goes further and seeks to engender a fundamental shift from words, phrases, and approaches that are demotivating action, and hindering connection and even harmful to well-being and health... even when not intended.

Over three half-day sessions in autumn 2020, Constituent Board members were introduced to some basic principles of Upwording, and then engaged in actively practising them.

The process began with Creating our Climate – a way to establish how the group wished to work together: in effect, a framework of agreed-on behaviour. It was also used as an opportunity to explore how to establish trust in each other; how to generate then refine ideas jointly, investing in the belief that issues can be worked through in a group. Important ingredients to facilitate these activities included encouraging openness, being comfortable with silence and with not knowing... yet accepting that it's ok to be clumsy when engaging in fresh terminology and approaching crucial topics.

The explorations also included gaining an understanding of how to engage and communicate in a non-hierarchical way, trusting

that the group can work together without someone 'being in charge'.

They started exploring how to engage in non-hierarchical communication within organisational structures that are inherently hierarchical according to responsibilities, often managerial, legal, financial, etc. There was a realisation that while the desire to dismantle power structures is often passionately articulated, even demanded, simultaneously it can be challenging for those wanting change to let go of the notion that someone has to make decisions, be in charge, take control. Even within the Constituent Board itself, having a remit to imagine what its function might be, there was concern that 'they still haven't told us what we can or can't do'.

A key element of the process of redistribution of power is for those who wish to engage in collective power to co-create the conditions, environment, and decision-making routes, by suggesting and testing.

Especially relevant in this context was a discussion, then understanding, that the desired outcome was not necessarily a universal agreement on all aspects. To arrive at a point where individuals felt they had contributed to a process, at the end of which an effective way forward was found, was beneficial.

In endeavouring to create healthy working practices, it's worth noting that 'must', 'have to', and 'need to' in particular, create pressure and can easily result in pressure and stress. Within many organisations it can seem that almost everything is deemed urgent. Accordingly, it may be prudent to

check the impact of the use of those words themselves, and possibly reserve them for true emergency occasions, such as when the building is on fire. For other circumstances a varied palette of descriptors is available, e.g., important, crucial, agreed to, desirable, useful, requested. Sometimes it can be hugely useful to ask what would happen if we didn't do something, did it later... or differently.

'Shoulds' are highly ineffective, often leading to little, temporary, or no action. Then they turn into 'should have done', thus potentially inducing guilt. The more 'should have done', the more guilt. And guilt festers.

In summary, 'must' and 'should' are crucial ingredients in the recipe for stress, anxiety, and guilt. Within both a work and personal context, notice how when you experience external demands, often time-sensitive, you experience pressure and in turn create more pressure by increasing the use of **MUST, -HAVE, -NEED, -SHOULD**. This is equally so with our families, partners, and teams... and ourselves.

Upwording proposes a shift to motivating, liberating terminology, using language with choice-based words with which we are already familiar, and so can quite easily facilitate new habits. **WANT to, WILLING to, PREPARED to, LIKE to, LOVE to** plus adding a question mark, invites considered reflection, conscious decisions are being made, and responsibility is being taken. We can often drop the **MUST, NEED to**, and simply be 'picking up the phone', and 'going to the next meeting'.

With Upwording as a foundation, the members of the Constituent Board were invited

to explore how to engage in Uncomfortable Conversations. Restrictions of time meant this was more a dipping of toes rather than a deep dive into what, on the surface, can seem to be frighteningly murky waters. What follows here is more detailed.

Habitually, such conversations are referred to as 'challenging' or 'difficult'. They can evoke anxiety, trepidation, stress and are often put off for as long as possible, or even avoided completely. There is an argument that this labelling, conjuring as it does images of obstacles to be overcome, creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, we advocate making the shift to calling them Crucial Critical Conversations where crucial and critical equate to 'of vital importance' and can include critique without the criticism – with room for disagreement. Central to the learning was a raising of self-awareness: to notice, in oneself, intention and positions taken towards others, whether accidentally, consciously, or through lack of awareness manifest in language, approach, attitude, tone, gesture.

Notwithstanding the importance placed on the conversation by the label attached, fundamentally it is an exercise in communication, the components of which are 'speaker/transmitter' and 'listener/receiver'. It is a continuous two-way process where those involved are constantly alternating between being both. Possibilities for a beneficial and effective conversation are enhanced by taking care of how these roles are played out.

#### LISTENING

Being fully present to the other person, aiming to really understand, rather than react or preparing for our turn to speak. Listening to what is being said, the actual words,

avoiding interpreting, hypothesising, crystal ball thinking. Resisting the temptation to jump to agree or disagree, and thus instead facilitating multiple perspectives. To embody (activate?) and remain consistent with these elements requires focused practice.

#### SPEAKING

At the heart of relating and communicating is intention. Intention determines position, which in turn informs approach and attitude. These will become evident: noticeable, visible, audible, in the choice of words, tone and physicality, gestures, facial expression, breathing, etc.

Check your Intention, Position, Approach, and Attitude (IPAA) before engaging, and throughout to maintain an egalitarian relationship. This applies especially when hearing something that is not liked, and the temptation is to slip into taking a position of righteousness with a desire to change the other person's view.

#### INTENTION

→ Seeking to find the quality of connection to continue the conversation with a view to reaching a mutually beneficial stage.  
→ Take care your intention is not to change, educate, blame, shame, or punish the person/people.

#### POSITION

→ Assume being WITH, not ABOVE, or BELOW other(s). Avoid the reflex to become the Saviour, the Rescuer, the Teacher or Preacher, Doctor, Therapist, etc. All of these assume a superior position.

#### APPROACH AND ATTITUDE

→ With curiosity, seeking to find out more, to learn, to understand the other person(s), the topic, the situation, the issue, and trusting that something beneficial can/will emerge.

When Upwording, curiosity and the desire to explore are fundamental, and keeping these intentions alive in the face of criticism and challenges is crucial. This means practising responding rather than reacting, inviting and requesting instead of telling, replacing interpreting with describing, and letting go of judging and categorising in favour of expressing a personal experience and current preference. Changes in behaviour and thinking manifest when a person feels genuinely heard, respected, and accepted because someone really listens. This is the 'HOW' of developing language and relational engagement as a joint endeavour.

Upwording raises awareness of the position chosen in relation to the other person or people and how this shapes intention and infuses approach and attitude, and thus the words, phrases, and tone used. When my position is 'with you', and my intention is to invite rather than coerce or educate you, then even 'you MUST see this film, I loved it', will be heard by you exactly as it is meant, an invitation.

The examples of words we have explored here represent one of multiple coercive areas, that we propose can benefit from Upwording. By cultivating the changes in intention, Upwording the language habits highlighted in the article, together, it is possible to co-create an equitable, harmonious, and safer life for all. To quote Mary Parker Follett, we can move 'From Power Over to Power With'. These small shifts can create seismic impacts.

For more information on Upwording, please visit:

<http://www.upwording.com/about>

## THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN CONSTITUENT-LED PRACTICE: A COMPANION PIECE ABOUT LANGUAGE

Denise Bowler  
Constituent Museum Curator  
—  
the Whitworth

Wittgenstein has been a key influence on communication, specifically language. Initially, he proposed that language works by triggering mental pictures of how things are in the world. People constantly exchange pictures with one another when they communicate through word selections. Problems occur when the picture is not clear in our own heads. This means that self-understanding is very important. Another danger is to read more meaning in words than originally intended. In *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1921) Wittgenstein suggests that we take time to speak more carefully and less impulsively.

Towards the latter part of his life, the philosopher shifted away from pictures to communicate ideas and move towards seeing words as tools that we use to play 'different games' where the games refer to different intentions. His thinking manifested in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) in which he proposed that words operate differently depending on their context, like a ball whose function changes depending on the game. As Christopher P. Jones says in explaining Wittgenstein's philosophy: 'Words are not fixed in their meaning. Instead they get their meaning from the community of people who use that language and have agreed on the words in place in their language-game. ... Wittgenstein's argument was that words have the propensity to adopt habits of usage which may in fact confuse the truth of things.' [15]

When working with people, bringing together communities with different cultural reference points, it is essential to be clear about your intention, to use language that can easily be understood and welcoming. There is a danger to use the language, such as the art speak, of my/your workplace. This is when words such as 'constituent' can become alienating. The use of language can be introduced at the start of relationships, acknowledging that we all have our own vocabulary, some of that adapts as we speak to specific people and that language is fluid. It can be beneficial to provide permission to question what is meant by words to ensure a shared understanding of intention. It is about creating a level base and being aware that some words can cause offense. Once words are brought into the conversation, it can start to change the system of relationships. It is the context for where we use the language that can also impact the meaning of the words. How we use language can initiate behavioural change. This can be positive and be the foundation to develop new relationships, access to which language might have prevented in the past.

15 — 'The Lure of Wittgenstein', Christopher P. Jones, Thinksheet, 26 September 2019.

<https://medium.com/thinksheet/the-lure-of-wittgenstein-19463da564>

## (UN)DEFINING QUEER

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For more on Queering the Whitworth,  
please visit:

<https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/about/queeringthewhitworth>

Queering the Whitworth is a framework for the Whitworth's LGBTQA+ programme. This consists of a series of events, interventions, talks, tours, performances, research and exhibition displays, which use the gallery's collection to explore LGBTQIA+ art and culture.

Queering the Whitworth started as a research project to develop an archive of queer artists and artworks. This research, was grounded in the understanding that throughout history the biographies of our 'LGBTQIA+' artists, artworks, or subject matters have been omitted from the canon of art history. By researching the collection from a queer perspective, it is allowing us to challenge the dominant, heteronormative position that art history and the museum finds itself within.

The art collection here at the Whitworth, contains a rich selection of artists that have used their creativity to acknowledge their sexual difference, or to question gender identities. This has been achieved through the artists' depictions of same sex attraction, through the portrayal of friends, family, lovers or partners, or by capturing their experiences of same sex loss or trauma within their artwork. The art collection at the Whitworth now has an archive of 800 artworks, that have been

given a queer reading. These works include big name artists such as David Hockney, Francis Bacon, and Keith Vaughan, but the archive also includes lesser known artists such as Pearl Alcock, Dame Ethel Walker, Mary and Matthew Darly, alongside Whitworth Young Contemporaries x Short Supply. New acquisitions to the Whitworth's collection have been made possible through Queering the Whitworth, including a quilt, Chain Reactions.2 and a triptyc of silk scarves, Memoirs of a Drag King, by Sarah-Joy Ford,

The Whitworth is fully aware that labelling artists with contemporary notions of gender or sexuality is problematic because these concepts are nuanced, complex, and individual. We are also questioning whether, without labelling artists or artworks, how can we make LGBTQIA+ communities identifiable within our online search collection or archive? To tackle some of these questions, we are currently working on a project called (Un)Defining Queer.

(Un)Defining Queer is a constituent-led form of practice that is developing a queer glossary in order to better represent our LGBTQIA+ communities, through language and representation both within the gallery and the collection.

Through the creation of a constituent group, over a period of six months we invite practitioners who self-identify as LGBTQIA+, or allies to deliver sessions with our constituents that revolve around words and language generally. These sessions facilitate conversations within a safe space in order to develop a deeper working relationship with members of our intersectional LGBTQIA+ communities.

Through (Un)Defining Queer and the glossary itself, we hope that the project helps us to better understand the needs and urgencies of our queer communities – as well as offer the gallery itself as a safe space for continual development of queer constituent building.

## NEXT STEPS

*How do we make  
sure this work  
continues?*

If we invite people to make decisions about the gallery and how it operates, there is a responsibility to demonstrate the authenticity of our invitation through visible ongoing commitment in time, money, and support from the institution's staff.

WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN  
Charles Esche

ON MAKING FOR A CONSTITUENT  
RECIPE FOR THE WHITWORTH  
Alistair Hudson

# WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN

Charles Esche  
Director  
—  
Van Abbemuseum

As a museum director in Western Europe, I find my colleagues increasingly united around the belief that the nineteenth century idea of the art museum has reached the end of the road. This book shows some of the steps we have taken to find a new route towards a different model. Whether it is from the point of view of inclusion, restitution, social justice, or the climate emergency, the idea that the art museum is a place that privileges Western bourgeois aesthetics to the exclusion of other forms of art and ethics has been found to be no longer sustainable. There are many consequences of post-1989 globalisation; one must be the idea that Europe can find a different relation to the rest of the world than occupation and dominance. Currently, Europe's cultural self-image often fails to reflect the people and beliefs that are here; it fails to recognise the histories of extraction and exploitation that made art museums possible; and it fails to nurture well-being or heal wounds across a diverse, precarious, and polarised society. If there is a growing consensus around this critical position towards a shared European history, there is still little agreement about how to act. It could be said that while a collective 'no' has been formulated, the proposals and actions that can produce a 'yes' are still being shaped.

This is where this book will hopefully find its place, as a proposal for how, by working with the constituents that make up a public museum, a way beyond either a self-righteous condemnation of the past

or a blind embrace of tradition can be found. In doing so, we are not looking to one all-encompassing universal 'yes', but rather to many different kinds of 'yes' that are determined by conditions on the ground in each place; yet all provide elements that show how fruitful is the common 'no' as well as how rich a pluriversal 'yes' could be. The most appropriate metaphor for these pluriversal affirmatives that I have found is the soil of the earth and the way it is both fundamental to life and yet extremely diverse in its specific qualities and capacities. Its differences are what encourage a vital biodiversity to flourish across the world and allow what decolonial scholarship calls the plenitude of life. Soil is not just a medium or an infrastructure but a living organism that nurtures other lifeforms but which those same lifeforms also need to nurture in order to benefit from soil's bounty and feel a common well-being. Is this not an appropriate way to imagine how the art museum might approach its users once it sees them as constituents of its own institutional well-being?

Extending the metaphor of the soil for a moment, then there is an interesting definition of soil degradation that might help to understand what art museums might need to address. The definition of soil degradation is 'a change in the soil health status resulting in a diminished capacity of the ecosystem to provide goods and services for its beneficiaries'. The first steps in nurturing the multiple soils under discussion are to stop degrading them, the second is to replenish and enrich them. In most

cases, degradation is produced by modernist agricultural practices that are designed to overstress the soil and maximise levels of productivity on a temporary but more profitable basis. In museum terms, the idea of degradation is not yet understood but it is not difficult to suggest that the maximisation of income and audiences, while organising repetitive 'blockbuster' exhibitions of a limited number of mostly white male modernist artists is less replenishing of the museum's long-term resources than it might be. As with contemporary agriculture, breaking dependency on such a model is not easy or painless, though the 2020–21 pandemic might offer a chance for a restart. As this book tries to sketch, the proposal of the Constituent Museum is designed to help share the bounty of the soils of each territory in which the museum finds itself, but it should remain simply one option among others, each one searching for the right sense of balance and thinking-feeling in order to contribute to a good life. This requires listening to the people that make up our constituencies and learning how to respond to them. They are after all the people who will be needed in order to keep the soils around the museum in good health – the institution cannot do that single-handedly. This mutual dependency is also what the soil teaches us, just as it reminds us of the need for a (bio)diversity that is often sadly lacking in art museums' collections and programmes.

The Constituent Museum Cookbook rises above the soil to help prepare the lifeforms that emerge from the ground. Cooking is a

\* The title 'We Must Cultivate Our Garden' comes from Voltaire's *Candide* and was used by the artist Nathan Coley for an illuminated artwork (Northern City Exhibition at The Lighthouse Glasgow, 2006).

second metaphor, one that also gives life, offers well-being and builds relationships of the kind that the art museum needs to nurture if it is to become a necessary public space for the times ahead. Much of the impetus for this form of rethinking the museum borrows from the decolonial scholarship developed by Walter D. Mignolo, María Lugones, Rolando Vázquez, and many others. It seeks to create situations in which we can turn away from the path that modernity has laid out. In many colonial cases, this can be achieved by trying to restore or return to existence what has been lost – a strategy of re-existence rather than resistance. For Europe, with its colonial burdens, re-existence is a call for a different kind of institutional behaviour, which above all, respects what has often been rejected as provincial, inadequate, or improper. By suggesting that the art museum might re-privilege both the soil on which it stands and the people who nurture it, it is our hope that an active, engaged, and demanding museum community might be provoked. However this happens, and there are a number of examples in this book, the joy of discovering common interests and identifying a process through which people come into voice and develop collective ways of sensing is one of the most rewarding experiences that a museum can offer. When this happens, European art and its institutions are as close to becoming decolonial as they can probably ever be, at least at the present time.

## ON MAKING FOR A CONSTITUENT RECIPE FOR THE WHITWORTH

A recipe is not simply a set of instructions to follow; it is something that is likely to lead to a particular outcome, subject to all kinds of variations, influences, and conditions. A recipe is often handed down or handed over as an offering, an open invitation, to take part in a conversation through material culture. Many recipes are not written down at all, simply lived through making together, repetition, or deviation.

In my household how to make any particular dish is contested territory – this much ginger in the dumplings, super slow not fast scrambled eggs, never any red wine in a ragù. It's rare things ever turn out quite the same, even when you follow the book. I'm open to changing it up every time. I like this way of working. It creates a richness and a variety, allows for competitiveness and a little conflict, but nonetheless pertains to a shared ambition or intent. For the most part it ends with everyone round the table, sated and sharing in another fond memory of a gathering of people and ingredients. It's not a food snobbery thing, it's healthy and how culture works in general.

How would we make a museum that was like that? Where everyone was present, where you could bring yourself, your own cultural stuffs and add them into the mix to make something together, with all those differences included, and always open to more. There will still be arguments about what is 'good', but it comes through making, testing, and sharing.

The truth is we don't know the recipe yet, and don't want to. This needs to be worked out as we go, talking to people, bringing people to the table and working it out. That way the most lasting change happens, honed over time, constantly feeding back, making mistakes, learning forward. I said once somewhere, in a rather flippant way that museums should be cookers not refrigerators, but in principle, I'd stand by that.

All the most elaborate or erudite recipes I try to follow in sauce-stained books, or through the flour-coated screen of my phone, seem to spend a disproportionate amount of words on the ingredients, the best place to source them, the pedigree, the provenance, terroir, or wotnot; even the most basic of tinned goods have their cultural baggage. In the spirit of not knowing the outcome yet, we'll also put our keenest attention to the ingredients here, as any chef seems to tell you, that is the best route to success.

Alistair Hudson  
Director  
—  
Manchester Art Gallery  
and the Whitworth

## Constituent Ingredients

### PLACE

Manchester is the city in which the Whitworth is located. It wasn't always a city, not until 1853, but from the 1700s onwards this murky and damp corner of England was turbo-boosted into a global industrial textile superpower, at the expense of a great number of people and the planet's health. Being the birthplace of (literally) filthy capitalism, Marx and Engels were able to put the city into notoriety for this and many other reasons, but the flip side is that all those satanic mills and alpha male Capitalists enraged enough counter movements in Unions, radicals, and suffragettes to make us feel less bad about ourselves. In post-war and postcolonial Britain, Manchester became a classic post-industrial city. I grew up there in the 80s and it was a pit, but had a certain cool energy centred on a situationist art movement masquerading as a music scene. It likes to think it does things differently, but is mostly very conservative. People overdress to go shopping, which is definitely not cool. Nowadays, it's got rich, expensive, and super-glossy in the middle and not so at all around the edges, but that's like most of the metropolitan world, and in that sense the perfect setting in which to run a relevant yet challenging art gallery. And there's a lot to sort out.

### BUILDING

The gallery was founded in 1889 as the Whitworth Institute and Park and conceived as part of the mitigation strategy against the ills of the mills. Yet while it was there to enable a healthy mind,

body, and spirit, it was also specifically designed to increase visual literacy and design in the textile workers and to firepower the economy. The money to build the gallery came from the estate of Joseph Whitworth, the go-to engineer of the age who made his mark in making things very flat, screws and bolts, and guns. So, a lot to unpack there. The main building today was built in 1908 and looks like a red brick Victorian hospital, in fact many people think it is, therefore threshold anxiety is doubled. There was a Scandi-modern makeover in the 60s and a major extension in 2015, which transformed us from a serious-minded university gallery into a glamorous international contemporary art 'player'.

### PARK

The Whitworth was designed as a gallery in a park, as a combined system of culture and nature, for all social classes and for the 'perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester'. The 19th Century Park was genteel and ornate with rose gardens, boating ponds, bandstands, the works. The post-industrial park-scape was in a state of deterioration and by the 80s was pretty much a no-go area at night and a high fence was erected to protect the gallery from the not-so-genteel park-frequenters. A cornerstone of the new Whitworth in 2015 was the removal of said fence and a reconnection of the Gallery and Park, with outdoor activities, an 'Art Garden' and the creation of a Landscape Technician and Cultural Park Keeper on the gallery team and a new Natural Cultural Health Service

that offers projects to do outside and in, for some of that good old-fashioned health of mind, body, and spirit. The park is well used and managed between the city council and the gallery along with an army of loyal volunteers and the Friends of Whitworth Park. In the last couple of years new community growing gardens for produce and good health have been planted out, along with plans for an outdoor classroom and an experimental park keeper's house as a new model for affordable city housing.

#### ART COLLECTION

There are currently close to 60,000 works of art in the nationally accredited collections of the Whitworth. Although for many years the gallery was nicknamed 'the Tate of the North' it is in reality a very different animal. There is no A-Z of art history, rather a collection of collections amassed, gifted, donated, bought, and otherwise by particular people for their particular reasons at particular times ever since its inception. I've never really understood the idea of a museum being a neutral space, when there are so many individuals and forces at work shaping it. Furthermore, the Whitworth has always been fully instrumental in its mission, using the art as a tool to do a job. Originally this was to influence the quality of design in the textile industry, but all works have been added attached to some kind of agenda, even if subconsciously. Our collections clearly show this and as a result are wonderfully diverse, rich, and complicated. Roughly one third textiles, one third wallpaper, and one third fine art, and under the latter category this includes painting, prints, works on paper, sculpture, film, digital art, books, a website, possibly a Non-Fungible Token, and the Musgrave Kinley Collection of 'Outsider Art' (although we contest

this label). Like a lot of art collections, it is biased, pump-primed with white male genii and the like, so there is a lot of rebalancing to do – which is a priority ingredient in baking the Constituent Museum cake. Some call it decolonisation, our friends at the Van Abbemuseum call it demodernisation, or you could just call it enriching, or maybe rebalancing.

#### UNIVERSITY

The gallery, park, and collections are all part of the University of Manchester. We don't have a gallery board, just a chain of command going up to the Board of Governors of the whole university. It is a big one by UK standards with about 40,000 students and part of the Russell Group of 'Red Brick' Universities, with teaching and research in all areas under the sun – and you could say in the Sun as well if you include Professor Brian Cox. Interestingly it started in 1824 as a Mechanics Institute – a kind of education centre for workers and learning the subjects 'of the hand'. Either way it means there is huge buffet of research partners and academics to mix with, including the university hospital across the road, many of whom use the gallery as form of respite from the stresses of caring.

#### STAFF

Everyone who works at the gallery is a university employee, except the cleaners who are subcontracted by university estates and the café, which is run by a contracted company. There have been around 80 members of staff in recent years, but latterly the ravages of austerity, economics, and Covid have reduced that by about 40%, which has been tough. Part of our rebuilding in a new form is going to have

to involve a bit of thought about how to do the work collectively. We have all kinds of specialisms on the team: textiles and paper conservation, technicians, curators in historic art, wallpaper, textiles, contemporary art. There's a Civic Engagement and Education Team and the Visitor Team who are the people who you'll talk with when you visit the galleries. It's often asked why we need so many people. But the exhibitions on view are only the visible surface of it, about 70% of what we do isn't always 'on display' – events, education, community projects, research, health programmes, and so on. Like many museums, the exhibitions traditionally originated in the realm of expert culture, an idea much under fire now. There is still a place for this but as part of range of voices from many places all forming shared, collective ideas of cultural contribution, rather than individual expression. The Constituent Museum does not mean passing the keys over, more like placing them on the table to share. In the old days it used to be that the expert curators chose what went on the walls and then everyone else scurried around trying to make it happen and getting people to like it, or just understand it. The way we're going is about dissolving the departments and projects into one holistic programme of work, a whole ecology of activity that has a point to it. Last year, in response to the straw on the straw on the camel's back of racism that was the death of George Floyd, we formed an Anti-Racism Group across the team. They act as a lens, a sounding board for the changes that are needed for a more equitable and ethical institution.

#### VOLUNTEERS

We have about 300 volunteers on the books who come and get involved in all aspects of

the gallery. Volunteers, by definition, don't get paid. We are endlessly debating who should get paid for what, but sometimes people need something other than money as remuneration. The main thing is that the person in question benefits, that they get the most out of the equation.

#### FRIENDS

The Friends of the Whitworth are an institution in their own right, founded in 1933 and going strong ever since. It's an independent charity run entirely by its membership with a collective aim to aid the work of the gallery. When I started as Director I was quite nervous that the Friends would disapprove of some of these new ideas I was bringing in, probably based on the experience of my very middle-class aunt, who was a member a few decades back. Actually, I sometimes think they are a more radical bunch than any of us on the payroll and have proven to be true friends to us through thick and thin.

#### WHITWORTH YOUNG CONTEMPORARIES

A group of 16-24 year olds who meet every week through the gallery. More recently they have been getting involved in the making of exhibitions. In the recent Utopias exhibition, they produced their own section of the show and wrote a manifesto. This co-curation thing is quite common now, and works to a certain extent, but I worry in the end it's just about making shows – and for what? I met with them afterwards and began a discussion about how best to enable using the gallery more on their terms. We're now transforming the whole first floor of the Whitworth into a more fluid space for production and ways of presenting and using art that isn't part of the

treadmill of exhibitions, but something else that we don't know what it is yet. You need a bit of adventure when you're young, and when you are older for that matter.

#### LOCALITY

The gallery isn't a city centre museum, it sits about a mile out of the centre of Manchester, at the intersection of a number of different worlds. To the north side the vast campus of the universities, to the east the Manchester Royal Infirmary (Hospital). Across the park to the south the neighbourhood of Moss Side extends round and beyond into Rusholme, Hulme, Fallowfield, and Brunswick. These neighbourhoods have deep and complex histories, enriched through the ebb and flow of migration, the entanglement of cultures, and complicated by the more brutal side of British politics and economics. The Whitworth has always been a gallery in Moss Side, but it is still working out how to be that.

#### USERS

I remember the word user used to be an insult. It still has implications of someone mis-using someone else, of an imbalance of power. But to use something is to employ with purpose. What if we thought of this in a positive way, and were honest about how we use art and use art institutions. Use has become a bad word in art, because the idea of using art as a tool or instrument for practical or even emotional purposes, is somewhat antithetical to the romanticised idea of creative freedom and individualism – or of the mystique of art as something you just can't pin down. But is that all part of the power play of connoisseurship and top-heavy decision-making in the art world? In the era of digital technology,

usership and user-generated things have turned the tables of who says what goes. What if we thought of the gallery this way? What would happen if everyone had the potential to become a user, to employ the gallery and its art for a purpose that worked for them?

#### CONSTITUENTS

In discussions with other museums, the idea of using the word user for people was just too harsh for them, and maybe sounded too much like some sort of consumer-focused neoliberal take-over (although I would contest this, arguing for us to go beyond that narrow understanding to a broader 'emancipated usership'). Constituent sounded better, it spoke of being a part of a whole and a political and social will to make something universally beneficial. Whether user or constituent, we are talking here about understanding everyone who engages with the gallery; the people who work there, the school visits, the lonely souls, the parents groups, students and academics, the ones who just use the toilet. If you think about it there are people who never come but whose lives are affected by the museum, through education, regeneration, tourism, economics – the way the city is enhanced by the gallery's presence and influence. Either way this moves us beyond the us-and-them concept of audience, that we are somehow performing or providing for and suggests that there is a cohesive whole we address, when in reality we are amidst an ecology of interconnected networks of people, that includes us.

#### NEIGHBOURS

We have neighbours, in the traditional sense. People living in houses next to or near the Whitworth. There are some quite active streets and communities, businesses, cafés, restaurants. Student accommodation blocks and Manchester Academy high school look over the park, and the city's main hospital is across the road. NHS workers and patients use the gallery regularly, but I'm not sure anyone around thinks about us as neighbours as such, they see an institution rather than the gallery as a community of people. This is a transition in progress and I think when everyone around us thinks of us in a neighbourly way, then we are well on the way.

#### MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

You often hear the council referred to like an alien force. From potholes to planning, people talk about MCC like they used to do in the 60s, about sticking it to The Man. It relieves us from our duties when we can blame a higher power, yet this one is elected democratically and is of us – it is literally a constituent-driven institution. I have to confess I find a lot of the council to be quite an impressive bunch. Bright, smart, and socially motivated, they have found their way into this vocation somehow and having to mediate between the interests of residents and the weight of international free market turbo capitalism, which until recently was the only game in town and has driven the growth of the city post-post industrialism. Places like Preston are pushing alternative operating systems, but in some ways have more freedom to do this right now, a bit like small museums can be more fleet of foot than the big ones. I would say it's coming though, the

imbalances in wealth, social status, money, race, education, etc. are too great to be maintained. I see the role of the museum, in part, as the place where we might convene on this and shape proposals and policy.

#### MONEY

The Whitworth's income comes from a mix of University of Manchester and UK Research and Innovation funds, Arts Council England, commercial income from the café, shop, and events such as weddings and conferences and a range of Trusts and Foundations, individuals, friends, and patrons. All of these come with relationships, interests, or agendas – nothing is 'neutral' and it's always a negotiation. It is hard to work out what is clean money, the whole of Manchester is built on shades of grey and even our own government is allegedly the world's second-largest arms dealer. On the whole museums don't like talking about money. Maybe the Constituent Museum should, and share its financial woes as much as the art. In 2023, we are doing an exhibition called Economics the Blockbuster, where we might just do that.

#### SKATEBOARDERS

Like many art centres we have a constituency of skateboarders who like to hang out on the plaza at the front entrance and grind off various bits of the hard landscaping. We met with them recently, after five years of free-styling had taken its toll on the stonework, to work something out. We drew up a plan to design and build some ramps with them that they can use instead and set up a WhatsApp group. I've always had a policy to try and talk when there's a problem, it's harder work, but pays off in the end. Mostly.

## CONSTITUENT BOARD

Through rethinking a constituent-led transformation of the gallery we formed a Constituent Board, made up with people who regularly use the gallery and park to help us shape this new future. This is not a board in the traditional sense, I would not want to inflict that level of bureaucracy on anyone.

The invitation here is to involve more people in the way we think about and make a programme that is relevant and useful to the people who live around us, building in cognitive diversity into programming and establishing a network of relationships that will enable the gallery to join in with and enhance existing concerns and interests of people, to join them at their table, not just invite them to ours.

In some ways the recipe is aiming to re-entangle the gallery back with the world, to grow roots and shoots out that will offer a more nourishing future. And it will take time.

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**The Constituent Museum Cookbook** outlines some of the projects that took place as part of the Constituent Museum project from 2019–22, between the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, NL) and the Whitworth (Manchester, UK).

The project explores different ways to connect with our local communities, bringing their voices and ideas to the fore, and reimagining the use of a museum.

Projects included **Whitworth Community Representatives**, electing local spokespeople for key decision making; **Still Parents**, working with families who have experienced babyloss; **Who Are We?**, exploring the traces of colonialism in Brabant (NL); and **Oakland Projects Revisited**, working with young people on taking ownership of their public identity.

This cookbook gathers together personal stories and honest discoveries from many investigations and experiments over eighteen months. The assembled ingredients for life can be used to cook up similar projects, seasoning existing ideals, or adding spice to your comfort food. Nourishment is essential to a healthy diet – nourishment that promotes creativity, a sense of belonging and place, as well as agency in the gallery and local community.

Take from it what you want, add to it, remix it, and bring your own recipes to the table.