

**“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent  
about things that matter.”**

Martin Luther King Jr.

**ARTS  
PROFESSIONAL**

# Freedom of Expression

A report of the ArtsProfessional Pulse survey  
February 2020



This report has been published by ArtsProfessional, a trading name of Arts Intelligence Limited.

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The publishers would like to thank everyone who completed the online Freedom of Expression survey during autumn 2019. Contributor comments have been redacted where necessary so that individuals may not be identified.

ArtsProfessional would welcome conversations with academic institutions and other bodies interested in having access to the wholly anonymous data set to conduct further analysis that will shed more light on freedom of expression in the cultural sector.

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# Foreword



Such is the importance of 'freedom of speech' to democracies that this principle is widely quoted in defence of activities that might, in former times, have been considered beyond the pale. Politicians pedal outright lies without fear of sanctions; social media platforms justify their resistance to moves that would constrain their power to make money; publishers (especially those with pockets deep enough to withstand a defamation claim) can fatally undermine a person's reputation in the name of 'public

interest', even if allegations against them are completely unfounded; and for the public, it's open season for expressing any offensive thought, desire or opinion online without fear of a face to face confrontation and little prospect of being sued. It is easy to argue that having freedom of speech brings out the worst in us all.

But, of course, the flip side is more deeply troubling. Curtailing free speech in whatever form is what allows dark forces to gather. Hidden from public scrutiny, brutal regimes can take punitive action against campaigners fighting for their human rights; the establishment can control the proletariat by keeping everyone in ignorance of inequalities; corruption can blossom, helping those in the know get richer and more powerful at the expense of

the marginalised; organisations can profit from the exploitation of their workers; and institutions can victimise individuals to avoid suffering reputational damage. Last month an independent [inquiry](#) into a surgeon's malpractice pointed the fingers at his colleagues for failing to speak out. "Some could have known, while others should have known, and a few must have known"



*"I often feel pressured to self-censor for fear of being 'cancelled' or bullied for not conforming to the orthodoxy"*

about his activities, concluded the inquiry chair. But a culture of "avoidance and denial" left his activities unchallenged, at the expense of his patients. And only last week the High Court ruled that [Humberside Police's response to an ex-officer's allegedly transphobic tweets](#) was unlawful and a "disproportionate interference" with his right to freedom of expression. The judge ruled that the impact of putting pressure on Harry Miller "because of his political opinions must not be underestimated", and said "to do so would be to undervalue a cardinal democratic freedom".

Given the arguments for and against controls on freedom of expression, ArtsProfessional's research reveals, unsurprisingly, a continuum of views on how much freedom is the 'right' amount. For some respondents, those working in the sector should be free to speak out on any subject at any time. No holds barred. When it comes to artistic output, self-censorship is rejected by the vast majority. Nearly 9 out of 10 agreed that "The arts & cultural sector has a responsibility to use its unique talents to speak out about things that matter, regardless of the potential consequences".

It's a very positive endorsement of the importance of free speech. So you might expect those working in the sector to be open and tolerant of each other, welcoming of debate and diverse opinion, and prepared to stand up and challenge the status quo. But nothing could be further from the truth. More than 8 out of 10 respondents agreed that "Workers in the arts & cultural sector who share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised". The overwhelming message that comes across from more than 1,000 free text comments running to 60,000 words is neatly summed up by one person, who said "I often feel pressured to self-censor for fear of being 'cancelled' or bullied for not



conforming to the orthodoxy”.

It's important to note that this research is based on a self-selecting sample of people. The anonymous forum provided by the survey is likely to have been more eagerly embraced by those who have experienced censorship or self-censorship themselves, and were free for the first time to share their stories without fear of retribution. This includes those who are subject to contractual gagging clauses that have taken away their right to speak out. But however sceptical you may be about the validity of the figures, there is no denying the anguish, fears, regret and anger expressed by the very many who left personal comments. Their experiences form a disturbing and permanent testimony that shines a light upon coercion, bullying, intimidation and intolerance among a community that thinks of itself as liberal, open minded and equitable.

Having promised contributors to the research that ArtsProfessional would publish their comments in full, we have done just that – but with trepidation. They reveal unpalatable truths that should make some people take a long hard look in the mirror. If they wish, readers can judge the situation for themselves in the appendix, unfiltered by the perspective of the report writer. AP's intervention in the comments has been simply to tidy up a bit of spelling and redact references that would identify individuals who are subject to accusations but unable to defend themselves.

*“...a disturbing and permanent testimony that shines a light upon coercion, bullying, intimidation and intolerance among a community that thinks of itself as liberal, open minded and equitable”*

ArtsProfessional's disturbing [ArtsPay survey](#), and the shocking revelations around [Sexual Harrassment](#) have both provided valuable evidence of serious injustices taking place in the sector under everyone's nose. This Freedom of Expression report goes some way to explaining why these have been able to take root.

But the research is the easy bit. The challenge now is how to put an end to some deeply damaging behavioural norms that are creating tensions between cultural professionals, setting the sector apart from the wider community, and will surely, in the end, undermine public confidence.

Liz Hill

Director, Arts Intelligence Limited  
Publisher of ArtsProfessional

February 2020

# Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

This ArtsProfessional survey has gathered evidence about the pressures to self-censor that artists and arts professionals experience in their working lives, and the ways in which they feel their freedom of expression is curtailed.

ArtsProfessional has for many years been reporting on censorship and self-censorship in the cultural sector, identifying pressures from within the sector as well as elsewhere. Fear of [‘biting the hand that feeds’](#) has long been recognised as barrier to free speech in the funded arts sector, but the problem is wider than this. In 2018/19, we reported on a [campaign to shut down an anti-Brexit exhibition](#); young people from BAME backgrounds [“censoring themselves to get ahead in their careers”](#); [concerns about China’s reaction](#) to a play about Tibet; and conflict over [transgender activism](#). The survey set out to discover whether these were isolated examples or the tip of an iceberg.

It ran from 29th October to 19th November 2019 and was distributed online and by email among

ArtsProfessional readers. 513

responses were entered, together

with more than 1000 open text comments, nearly all from people working in arts or cultural organisations. Of these, two-

thirds are directly involved in creating or presenting artistic work.

As other research has done in the past, this survey covered artistic freedom of expression, exploring the circumstances under which artists are either prevented from pursuing certain creative projects, or being placed under pressure to curtail or cease certain activities.

*“The report starts by examining what is being left unspoken – the themes, views and ideas that arts professionals are too frightened to speak about”*

But perhaps most interesting of all is the significant new body of evidence that has been generated about self-censorship among others working

in the cultural sector – and not just in terms of artistic expression. The report starts by examining what is being left unspoken – the themes, views and ideas that arts professionals are too frightened to speak about. It goes on to explore the reasons for their concerns and the sources of the perceived pressures that are holding them back from honest and open conversations. Finally, it looks at the issues specific to artists and others involved in producing or presenting artistic work.

*“Fear of ‘biting the hand that feeds’ has long been recognised as barrier to free speech in the funded arts sector, but the problem is wider than this”*

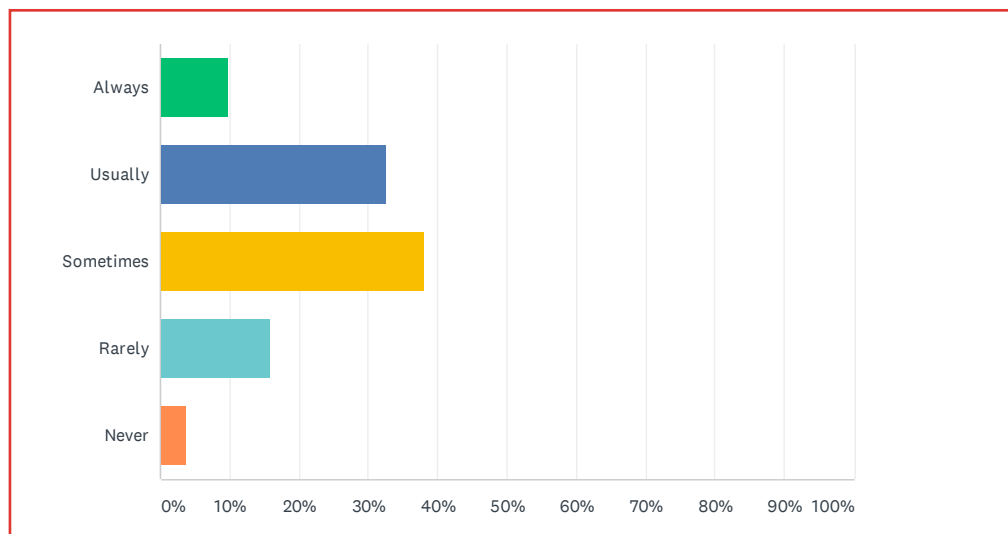




## 2.0 Do arts professionals speak their minds?

Although freedom of speech is recognised as fundamental in a democratic society, that doesn't mean people are confident to exercise their right to speak out without fear of recrimination or reprisal. The survey provides clear evidence of cultural sector workers feeling – or being – compelled to keep their opinions to themselves. Less than half (42%) said they always or usually 'feel free to speak publicly (whether in person or on digital media) about their personal opinions on issues affecting the arts sector'.

### Q1 Do you feel free to speak publicly (whether in person or on digital media) about your personal opinions on issues affecting the arts sector?



But at the same time, 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'The arts & cultural sector has a responsibility to use its unique talents to speak out about things that matter, regardless of the potential consequences', so the mismatch between the sector's collective view on the importance of freedom of speech and what happens within the sector itself is striking.

One person commented that "the arts in this country [are] usually a beacon of self-expression in a world where the opposite is often true." But they were in a minority. A comment saying people working in the sector are "nowhere near as open as they pretend to be, there is a lot of hiding and backstabbing" appears to be nearer to the truth. Many responses included anguished comments about the pressures arts workers feel to conform to sector norms that may not represent their own views. "I've [been] campaigned against for having opinions which are entirely mainstream outside of the arts sector" said one respondent, and they are by no means the only one.

The dangers of this were summed up by another respondent who expressed views held by many: "Our arts, culture, and indeed education sectors are supposed to be fearlessly free-thinking and open to a wide range of challenging views. However, they are now dominated by a monolithic politically correct class (mostly of privileged white middle class people, by the way), who impose their intolerant views across those sectors. This is driving people who disagree away, risks increasing support for the very things this culturally dominant class professes to stand against, and is slowly destroying our society and culture from the inside."

Another respondent, who listed a string of opinions they felt were deemed unacceptable

in the sector, commented: "I feel compelled to emphasise that I don't support any of the above - far from it! However, I do think that it is important that such views, which are held by so many, are voiced and that we listen and create opportunities to debate them openly."

But not everyone felt that self-censorship was a bad thing in all circumstances. One commented that expressing "alt right political views" was unacceptable, and that they would be "happy to see no platforming here, as I find such views repellent." Another felt that supporting free speech and denouncing no-platforming is deemed unacceptable in the sector, and it would be inadvisable to say "that offending people with your words is not a crime".

One respondent felt that self-censorship from within the sector is less of a problem than pressures from outside: "I actually don't think, due to the open and confident nature of the majority of people in the industry, that many feel at risk of expressing from fear of fall-out of others within the industry. Opinions of those from within the industry are more prone to backlash from those outside the industry."

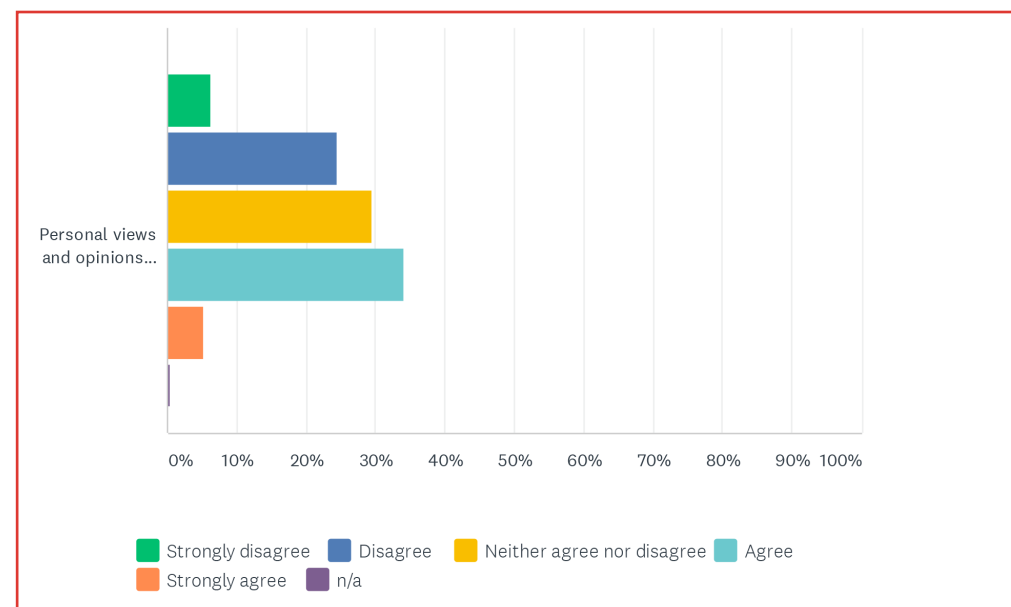
But the figures and comments give the lie to this assumption. Instead, the assertion of one person that it would be inadvisable to say "anything classed as politically incorrect in the UK" is borne out in the survey, which confirms the suspicion of one respondent that those working in the sector are "unable to have a view on anything or challenge anything that's extremely left wing or politically correct for fear of being called racist, xenophobic, bigoted etc".



In total, over three quarters of respondents agreed that "Workers in the arts & cultural sector who share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised" and only 40% agreed that "personal views and opinions are met with respect

by others working in the arts & cultural sector."

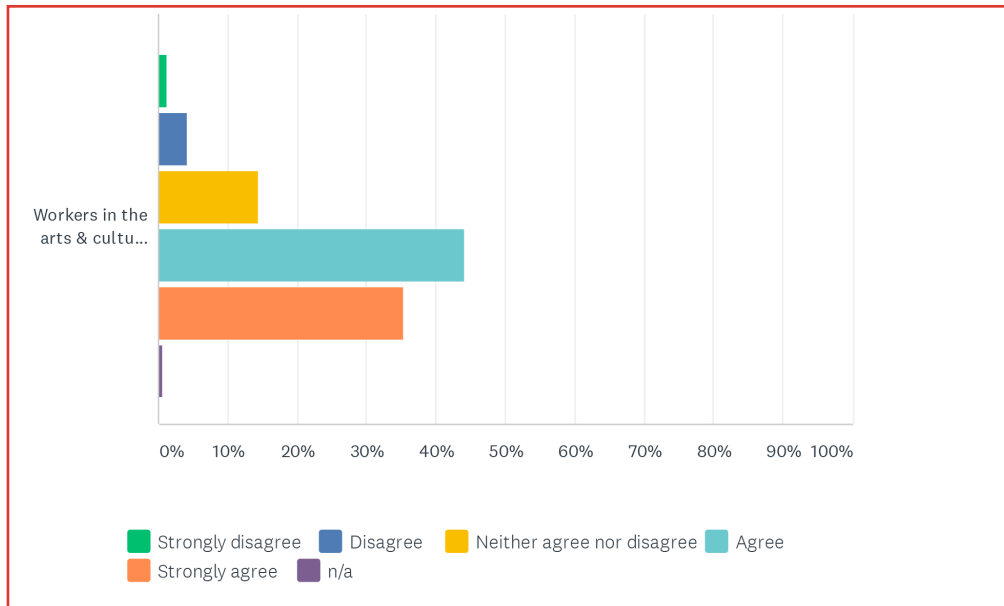
### Personal views and opinions are met with respect by others working in the arts & cultural sector







## Workers in the arts & cultural sector who share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised



These findings cast serious doubts over any moral high ground that the sector may claim around tolerance and respect. One person commented that we “need to accept that it is okay for people to disagree with us and that sometimes someone will say something that you consider stupid or offensive. That does not necessarily mean that the person who said it is a bad person, and they certainly should not be ostracised forever for saying something that you do not agree with”.

## 3.0 What is left unspoken?

If self-censorship is so prevalent, then what type of opinions do those working in the cultural sector fear sharing?

The whole idea that any topic at all should be off-limits is clearly of concern to some. “It’s the arts and we should always discuss everything. . . . To not discuss is wrong [and] nothing should be taboo”, said one respondent. But whether or not people should speak their minds, it’s quite clear that there are many, many topics that are indeed ‘taboo’ in the sector.

When asked to give examples of opinions that people working in the arts & cultural sector would be ill-advised to express publicly, hundreds of responses gave examples that suggest a culture of “arts group-think” exists around a multitude of issues and themes.

### 3.1 Politics

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the timing of the survey, the most commonly cited area where opinions are being held back related to politics, and Brexit in particular.

“Support for the Conservatives or any other right-wing party” were by far the most common examples given of opinions that people working in the arts & cultural sector would be ill-advised to express publicly, while very few made similar observations about support for left wing parties. “It wouldn’t be advisable to point out that the arts tend to do well under the Tories”, commented one person. Another believes “an increasingly hard left wing agenda is limiting free speech”, and someone else noted that conversations about political views would be difficult “from centre left to the right of the spectrum”.



Owning up to “having voted for Brexit” or even “expressing sympathy with Brexit” was also widely felt to be frowned upon in the sector, and that this posed a particular block on free speech. One person said: “17.4 million voted for Brexit. Most of the opinions of these people, on many subjects, would lose them employment in the publicly funded arts sector in the UK”.

In some cases it appears that not just individuals, but organisation norms have been determining ‘acceptable’ views on Brexit. One respondent said: “In our organisation those who voted to leave the EU have been ostracised. . . . remainers plaster Bollox to Brexit stickers all over the office. We have also received emails containing petitions to stop Brexit from the CEO despite half the office voting to leave.”

Others, though, felt their organisations should have spoken out against Brexit, but didn’t: “Most of the big institutions just stayed silent. . . . You know, the British Museum can’t [say] anything about this because eventually it was the will of the majority of the people, but still one can have an opinion right?”

Many comments from UK respondents spoke of an intolerance of right of centre views more generally: “So there is for instance plenty of tolerance of diversity but not of people who hold strong views about restricting immigration. And arts workers are more tolerant of pro-choice than pro-life views.” Another suggested that “positive comments about conservative politicians or policies, or any views that might now be considered socially conservative (even ones that until recently would have been considered liberal) about, for example, feminism, trans-issues, freedom of speech, etc.” would go down badly in the sector.

But it was pointed out by one respondent that in countries with more conservative political systems, or even countries with Communist-spectrum systems, such as China or Vietnam, the opposite might be true. And a respondent from Northern Ireland felt



that “left-of-centre opinions are just as likely to be controversial, in terms of the general public. . . The conservatism of audiences - and boards of some larger institutions - feels mismatched with a lot of the attitudes and ideas of people working in the arts.”

Political sentiments can affect the programming of artistic work. One person said of their own organisation: “If an arts manager wanted to programme a talk by a certain right wing MEP, as that person lives in the local area and is a keen supporter of the arts, then they would be met with incredulity, derision and scorn by other officers, Board Members and councillors in the area”.

Political tensions can also create uncomfortable environment for staff. A respondent commenting on hostility to “right wingness”, said: “a copy of The Spectator winds up in our kitchen regularly, on top of the Guardian. People move it around - it’s a weird game of passive aggressive, opinion-based cat and mouse.”

In some parts of the UK, the sector may have less tolerance of alternative views than others. One person commented: “I do live outside of London and am constantly surprised by the inability of my peers to understand or comprehend or even listen to any other views. . . In the regions, you’re far more likely to find people with more right-wing views and opinions working in the arts – still not so much in the artistic teams, but absolutely within the staff working on finance, marketing, technical, operations. I think where there are less arts specialists working in the arts - that they’re drawn more from the communities they serve – it’s much more representative and less shocking when someone expresses a ‘divergent opinion’”.

Sometimes, the political opinions being held back are in relation to fears of public – and press – reaction, rather than a reaction from within the sector itself. “Any negative opinion that points to the wrongdoings of the current government” was felt to be risky territory by one. Someone else elaborated: “It really hard when arts organisations are based in Tory-controlled local authority areas and receive public subsidy to criticise. . . .” “Anything which is anti-Brexit or anti-Johnson is likely to attract the wrath of the right wing press”, said another. But it’s certainly not a problem that’s unique to the UK. One respondent cited “Spanish repression”, explaining that “many Catalan actors or writers cannot speak out freely fearing reprisals”.

Organisational neutrality was recommended by one person, who opposes party political allegiances: “I do not believe organisations should promote political allegiances in the same way arts venues should not host party political activities in their buildings. Arts spaces should be neutral and welcoming to all, no matter of political beliefs. I struggle with organisations hosting political campaign launches like BAC did for Labour this week, if that was UKIP for example, there would be some follow up press! I don’t think Politics with a big P should play apart in the arts; political work can take place without being party political and can still have the same impact.”

But arts professionals may struggle to achieve such neutrality if it conflicts with their own personal beliefs: “Consistency is hard - we do tend to allow left wing ‘extreme’ views more artistic leeway than ‘equivalent’ right wing views and I want to keep it that way but I am aware of the logical inconsistency!” said one respondent.



### 3.2 Funding and sponsorship

“Criticism of the way the arts are funded” is clearly a topic that many respondents are wary of.

Several commented that it would be inadvisable to talk about the sources of arts funding: to express “opposition to the idea of public subsidy”; to express “support for Tory government cutting arts funding”; or to challenge the use of Lottery money for the sector. One commented on the imbalance in “on one hand lottery funding which comes mainly from lower socio-economic groups who then don’t engage or benefit from the activity or facilities. On the other, worshipping the rich who splash their cash on naming things.”

“Challenging the narrative that we are dependent on public funding” was felt by several to be damaging. “We are all discouraged from re-imagining how a society supports arts and culture. Dissent, enquiry and challenge are all seen as heretical” said one. And another commented “Any attempt to suggest that the arts is worthy of a more imaginative investment strategy aimed at combining artistic merit with popularity and commercial viability are strongly resisted. Anyone who dares to make such an argument is often condemned as a capitalist sell-out. As a result the arts continue to occupy an under-funded space, and often have an opportunity to really connect with wider audiences, and the false idea is fostered that the arts are a ‘luxury’, ‘useless’, ‘niche’ or ‘middle class’”



Failing to engage in this debate could be holding the sector back from a more fundamental examination of the place of the arts in society, said one respondent: “I know from my own my experience any criticism of the ideological and philosophical basis of arts funding is strongly discouraged. For instance, any

attempt to assert the importance of the arts to civil society and to social capital building per se, or to portray the arts as anything other than secondary to more utilitarian policy priorities. Arts organisations are effectively forced to accept that the arts are only really valuable to society if they achieve social outcomes, such as engaging with disadvantaged groups or addressing social issues like discrimination, mental health, or knife crime. This occasionally leads to absurdity as the arts are asked to somehow ‘make up for’ or provide solutions for things which are actually a result of years of government neglect and underfunding. In the meantime the real human value of the arts is undermined and marginalised.”

A lot of comments covered the dangers of criticising arts funders themselves (described as “sacrosanct” by one). “In our area, people have the ‘don’t bite the hand...’ mentality” said one person. “They complain to each other but do not band together to create a stronger voice and demand changes or the opportunity to help shape funding and infrastructure to do with arts and culture. People are tired, doing things on a shoestring and doing things in the same old ways - there doesn’t seem to be energy to fight or work it out.”

Another talked about the danger of losing funding for commenting on bad practice. “Seeing the way certain things work behind the scenes and knowing that calling it out might reduce chances of future investment or partnership”, said one person – and that doesn’t just apply to public sector funding. “Any criticism of private funders whose business practices are somewhat un-ethical could cause unrest and result in the withdrawal of that funding” said another.

Commenting on the activities of sponsors was cited by several as an area where arts workers tread carefully. “Being happy to take funding from controversial companies such as oil or pharma” was a view that one person felt it would be inadvisable to



raise, but another person felt it unwise to say “anything against Shell’s involvement in the arts sector as they supply a lot of funding.” Someone else pointed out that “other organisations such as universities would happily accept such support.

There was a sense that funders’ power gives them immunity from scrutiny: “I think it is very difficult for people in the sector to express dis-satisfaction about how a funder is behaving/operating. I have heard that a senior decision maker in a funding organisation indicated that if a Freedom of Information request was received it would demonstrate that the person requesting was antagonistic or in opposition to the funder.”

The implications of this were explored by some respondents: “Some relationships with funders are child and parent and it’s hard to challenge or open up a dialogue with them even if there are genuine concerns. It cuts down the learning” said one. Another contrasted the situation in the funded arts with the commercial arts: “You need to look at the commercial sector (theatre in my case) for comparison. Commercial theatre-makers are not dependent on funding bodies, and are happy to talk about factors that affect their business interests.”

“Criticising a grant funder for their decisions in giving or turning down a grant” would be a problem for many. In particular, it was feared by several that criticising the relationship between England’s larger National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Arts Council England (ACE) or criticising funders for supporting the “same old” (regularly funded) artists and companies” would be inadvisable. One felt that “funding bodies and funded organisations often have a corrupt relationship” and another commented on “backhanders all over the place. Money is always given where it’s always gone. Funders

preserve the status quo.”

Another was afraid to say publicly that “some funded work is ‘the emperor’s new clothes’” And another that “funding is often wasted on poorly thought out projects but success criteria being often self-set produces successful results by definition.” One person commented that the one thing they wouldn’t comment on “is how often I see publicly-funded theatre and spoken word poetry and think it’s a load of old tosh that’s been funded purely because it addresses important issues.”

### **3.3 Gender identity / sexuality**

Among the topics that appear to be no-go areas in the arts are gender and sexuality. One person summed up the view of several: “Anything to do with gender issues, especially trans issues, will get a lot of flak for either not being on message enough, or being off message, or too on message. It’s become pretty much a no-win situation where the only sensible thing to do is not engage with anyone publicly about it, and especially with the zealots on both sides who won’t listen to any kind of fact, compromise or reason on the subject. LGBT+ issues and the language around them are becoming (again) similarly a minefield even for people who are LGBT+ themselves or active allies.”

A wide range of comments revealed the strength of opinion on these issues, even extending to fears of physical violence. “Artists are afraid to contest trans rights activists positions for fear of vitriolic verbal and sometimes physical violence against them, particularly women artists”, said one, while another commented “if you’re uncomfortable with gender neutral toilets, I would expect this to risk accusations of

bigotry from within the industry. Ditto expressing reservations about gay marriage/ donor fertility/ surrogacy.” The sector’s reluctance to express views on this theme reflects, according to one respondent, the attitudes of “the media, the government and many public bodies [who] seem reluctant to enter or even document the debate, which seems unprecedented.”

### 3.4 Religion / sectarianism

Some respondents are clearly concerned about expressing religious views or beliefs in the sector, especially where “strong religion-based beliefs conflict with equality of protected characteristics”. One person commented that questioning “religious based laws: especially blasphemy, the treatment of women and non-believers in Sharia law and other strict religious laws” would be inadvisable. A number of Christians said they didn’t feel able to talk about their faith and one said they felt evangelical views would not be tolerated while “other religions OK”. Another commented: “I’m a practising Christian and have had people assume that this must mean I’m anti-LGBT, against women’s rights, and believe in creationism. None of these are true, but repeated experiences have made me question the wisdom of expressing my faith in certain situations.” Another person felt that “any views that put religion on a par with secularism – particularly Christianity” wouldn’t be acceptable.

People of several faiths felt it would be ill-advised to share their views. One person commented that “anything challenging Judaism” would be a problem, but others made a clear distinction between this and discussion about the politics of Israel. “Taking an anti Israeli stance” was cited as being inadvisable by one, while another said that “criticism of BDS, and conversely support for Israel” wouldn’t be acceptable.



Another commented on their experience of raising the issue of sectarianism in Scotland on stage: “It provoked public death threats from the U.V.F., [but] rather than rushing to my defence the theatre sector was silent - the only comments I received was it was my fault for raising the issue.”

Politics and religion also overlap in Northern Ireland, and one respondent commented: “Northern Irish protestants are one of the groups that it’s still ok to hate.” They went on to describe the value of Ulster Marching Bands, saying “They are not perfect and sectarian attitudes in many quarters still exist, but this is a community emerging from conflict and support rather than attacks will make things better. This view would be labelled as right wing despite the fact that many in this community are left wing. It’s just easy to label them all. I expressed this view recently to a person active in my art field and also raised the issue of Corbyn’s support for the IRA. Immediately I was labelled as a Tory and realised I should probably keep my mouth shut”.

### 3.5 Diversity, equality and inclusion

Many respondents commented on the extent to which the arts are – or aren’t – inclusive. Several noted that the arts are “still essentially elitist” but felt saying this wouldn’t be acceptable. “The notion that arts are for everybody is quite a convenient tag on which to spin a funding application, but not much else” said one, while another commented that “elitism in arts is not a bad thing as such – no-one would call top athletes elitist, so why us? Like it or not, widening participation is populism in disguise.”

In a similar vein, celebrating more ‘popular’ art forms may also be unwise, according to some respondents. One felt it would be inadvisable to comment that “Beyoncé is a more important cultural figure than Olivia Coleman”, while another felt saying “that only certain types of art deserve funding/attention” would be unacceptable.





The theme of diversity attracted a lot of comment. One person thought it would be inadvisable to “engage with issues caused by differences between almost any kind of minority and the rest of the population”, and indeed, the many comments fell into two categories.

Firstly, there were those who felt the sector was only paying lip-service to diversity, yet didn't feel able to say this publicly: “I am always keen on advocating for more diversity in the arts, but I am also aware that talking about some things could cause a furious backlash if you are not very careful”, said one person.

Many felt discrimination exists but wouldn't feel able to challenge the people or systems leading to the discrimination. One said: “I think we should be talking about colonialism in galleries and museums, the lack of female artists being represented equally, the ignoring of disabled artists and the persecution of LGBTQ artists, but I have seen people online getting very bad responses to some opinions they have, so, while I can and do advocate for diversity, I am also careful about how I phrase things.”

Views and observations that people felt they had to keep quiet include:

- “disabled and international (non-UK born) candidates are invited to job interviews to tick boxes, but will rarely get the job”
- “that we need to introduce quotas for representation, we should have a minimum number of women, minorities, disabled people, working class people etc. In leadership and in all levels.”
- “knowing [organisations] have policies in place to be inclusive but will find loop

holes to not employ people with disabilities”

- “that they are just ticking boxes for inclusion, but otherwise really do not care, nor agree with it as it is just that - ticking boxes”
- “that most diversity schemes are shallow and not working”
- “that the arts & cultural sector is dominated by middle class people with degrees, and biased in that direction”
- “that we are simply repeating work that's already been researched and done, and touting it as groundbreaking - see diversity reports and things about getting young people into work.”

The second group comprised the significant number of respondents who suggested too much attention is being paid to diversity, but equally felt unable to speak their minds. For example, people felt it would be unacceptable to share views:

- on “whether quotas for. . . female composers will solve the problem (if indeed there is a problem!)”
- “about different social classes - except upper and middle classes who are always ripe for mockery”
- “that the sector is too focused on young people that other groups are being ignored”
- “that you see nothing wrong with an able-bodied actor taking on a disabled role”
- on “anything to do with patriarchal/white power structures being acceptable”

- that employment to address diversity and to positively discriminate can mean talented, created and competent individuals who don't fit those classifications are sidelined to meet quotas"
- suggesting "scrapping schemes, programmes, initiatives, etc like Creative People and Places, diversity because it's all political correctness gone mad"
- "not supporting education and outreach because it costs too much"
- that "community participation in creation will lower the overall quality of a show/ programme"

One respondent raised questions about the policy of excluding independent schools from funded schools-based arts schemes. They saw this policy as "punishing the kids because their parents have chosen or have enough resources to pay for their education directly". The response from scheme organisers was: "Lots of tight smiles, but no answer and I was under no illusions that this was not a 'good' question".

### 3.6 Arts sector norms

Various hierarchies are evident within the sector, but some respondents felt it would be ill-advised to challenge these. "The arts at least at the highly paid and marketed level are something of a closed shop", said one, while another commented on "Privilege: how some people get to do the job / lack of transparency / word of mouth employment opportunities for friends of friends."



The idea that certain people in the sector enjoy privileges for reasons other than merit was raised by some. One person who attended an event with a theatre critic was asked how they were enjoying the show: "I gave an honest answer and said I was not enjoying the show and thought the production values

were low. Their exact response to me was: 'You can't say that - they are highly thought of in the industry'. I told them that ... based on what I was seeing that reputation was not justified and if they didn't want an honest answer then why ask the question! Needless to say they have not been in contact since!"

"Questioning the supremacy of the performing arts, particularly in relation to funding" and "preferring to celebrate the achievements of writers rather than actors" wouldn't be wise either, according to someone else. Neither would "not seeing Producers as Gods". "Telling an artist/artistic director they are wrong" would be a bad idea, said another, while someone else said the same about the view that "artists and workers should be respected for being the ones who actually do the work."

Another talked about hidden hierarchies within the public funding system: "It is not wise to pronounce on the prevalence of Arts Council and DCMS 'freemasonry'. This used to be ensured through appointments to the 'Advisory Panel' system, but since that disappeared the petty corruption is even less visible or accountable."

More sinister still are some of the comments about behaviour within arts organisations. Reflecting the concerns raised by the 'me too' movement was the observation that it would be inadvisable to say "you've been bullied or harassed by someone who is in the 'in-crowd'". One person said: "Me too will never root out the offenders as there are too many complicit in allowing bad behaviour or saying it's part and parcel of the industry."

Many people commented on how difficult it would be to speak out about pay and working conditions in the sector. "We treat freelancers of all kinds terribly and often seem to look down on 'non-artistic roles' whether employed or freelance" said one person. Another summed up the views of many, saying "Talking about low pay, exploitation, financial mismanagement and bad employment practices in any sector of the arts from galleries to theatre will get you labelled a troublemaker by a lot of the senior people



who work in those fields.” It’s a view echoed by a comment warning of talking about “how key cultural institutions spearheaded the introduction of zero hour contracts into the workplace and how trustees can cover-up their colleagues unlawful activities.”

A few people contested the dominant view on pay and conditions in the sector, but they would be concerned about voicing the opinion that “people in the arts are really not that badly paid any more in comparison with other sectors”. And that “a lot of people in the arts have a very cushy life”.

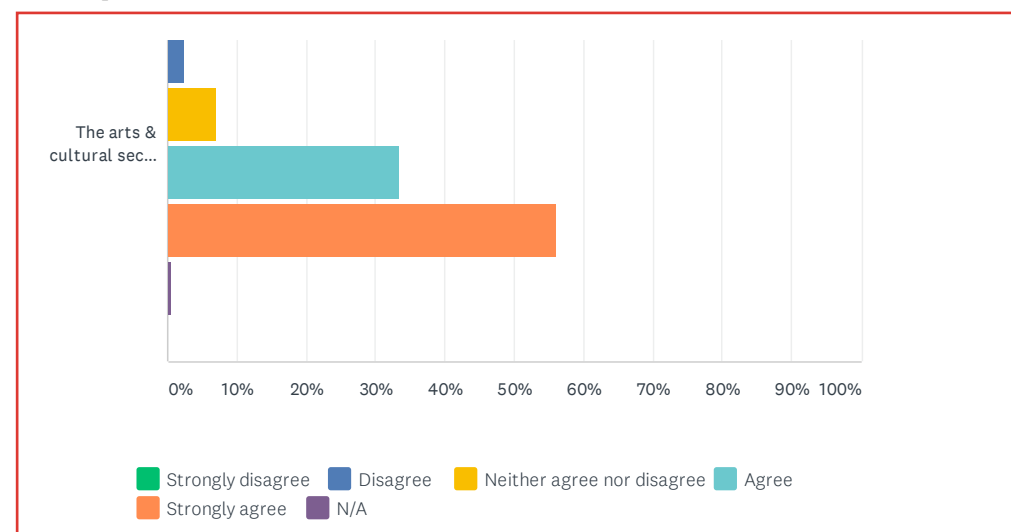


## 4.0 Why don't people speak out?

“Paradoxically for an industry that has generally prided itself on its inclusivity, there is very little inclusion for those who do not have the ‘right’ views or have views which are considered problematic”. This comment neatly sums up the pressures felt by arts workers to keep their opinions to themselves. The price of speaking out can be exclusion – from social and professional situations.



**The arts & cultural sector has a responsibility to use its unique talents to speak out about things that matter, regardless of the potential consequences.**



Those at an early stage in their careers may be less inclined to express their opinions than those more senior, perhaps because the stakes are higher and their future careers are at risk: “Expressing controversial opinion frequently depends on where you are within the organisation and what level of influence or control a person may have” said one, and another was wary of expressing views in groups or public meetings that diverge from those leading the meetings: “. . . it is usually clear what one’s own views should be.”

### 4.1 Fear of consequences

The survey records many examples of how speaking out can have unpleasant consequences.



Verbal attacks were mentioned by several: “I am conscious of differing views about inclusivity, abortion and views on LGBT issues and know that if I express an opposing view to the ‘perceived’ majority I will be shouted down”, said one. Another commented: “The arts and cultural sector does not have any moral high ground in relation to individuals engaging respectfully with other people’s views. . . There are examples of ad hominem attacks being made on artists or companies who have received funding from the public purse... This can make people feel very cautious about raising their heads above the parapet.”

A vivid example was given by a respondent who reported being “reprimanded, threatened, screamed at, shouted at, bullied by my ex-boss because of my public online, published writings, media interviews and comments in support of Brexit”, and said “arts organisations will not hesitate to throw someone under the bus rather than make a principled position that what I say on my personal social media platforms has nothing to do with the work I do as a service provider or employee”.

Another respondent talked about attacks and abuse online, saying: “We recently attempted to build a new theatre locally. Due to my online links to the organisation who proposed and supported the scheme, I’ve had to heighten my security setting, change my name and close my twitter account.”

Not all pressures are so overt. One person described “manipulative” ways of silencing them, “by saying ‘you seem stand offish’, or ‘to change things we have to make them comfortable’ (them being gatekeepers), or being out right kept out of important conversations, people trying to isolate my voice or isolate my organisation. When I have

experienced racism or whitewashing I have been told ‘I’m sure they didn’t mean it like that’ or that I ‘need to stop seeing everything through a race lens. It’s really very hard to pin point because it comes in many different shapes and sizes, which is what makes the silencing more difficult to deal with.”

Another comment said: “I have had the experience of asking one pointed question in a public forum that made me lose out on a couple of commissions and be treated like an outsider in my own city because the person I addressed the question to didn’t like being asked it. I will not make the same mistake again.” Many others commented that they don’t and wouldn’t speak out for fear of similar reactions.

Indeed, career opportunities and funding are widely thought to be at risk from sharing opinions and observations that others don’t like. The sentiment expressed by one respondent sums up many other comments: “I do try and remain neutral so it doesn’t affect employment prospects”.

And one BAME artist, administrator and producer reported feeling “that speaking out plainly about issues including diversity and the clear lack of progress within the industry can still harm me”.

Such fears exist even one step removed from those who depend on funding. A respondent from an agency commented: “A lot of my arts clients get council funding, so I have felt I’ve had to limit my critical views of the council (of which we have many) in order to not cause any problems for my client and potentially lose their work.”

It’s a particular issue for freelance workers, one of whom said they are: “too nervous. . .

to call out poor behaviour". An artist commented: "If you don't echo or mirror the views and styles of those who hold the purse strings you also get excluded." The difficult balance between freedom of speech and losing a job or client means "you have to be a cheer leader of all sorts of companies and values that don't necessarily fit your own values" said another.

But one person's response on speaking out is to 'feel the fear but do it anyway': "Personally, I don't understand why we are all so cowardly . . . our self-interest gets in the way. I have found that if someone decides to bad mouth me I have ALWAYS found other work, and usually with much better people and clients."

#### 4.2 Fear of causing offence

The fear of offending is recognised as another factor driving self-censorship. Political correctness "dominating" the arts and cultural sector's conversations is described by one respondent as jeopardising freedom of expression. They said: "It's a real shame as we are supposed to push boundaries and take risks, move forward and nurture 'out of the box' thinking, but we end up being almost brainwashed by what's acceptable and meant to be said, while taking extra care at not hurting anyone's feelings."

Is this a new problem? Some think so. "People are so easily upset by any remark that 20 years ago would have been shrugged off" said one, while another described the cultural sector as being in a "quagmire of wokeness". One person said:

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to have open discussions on sensitive subjects without invested parties taking offence, reacting aggressively often before they have understood the points being raised. Knee jerk reactions are helpful to no-one."

The narrow line between giving offence and hate speech was a



recurring theme, with some respondents remarking that "freedom of speech should not include hate speech or derogatory comments". This is where questions of security arise too. A curator of Passion for Freedom Festival in London reports experiencing pressure and intimidation that stopped certain work being shown as the police described it as "potentially inflammatory" and would have charged £6K per day for protection. "The 'hate speech' law could be weaponized to shut down the debate", they said.

#### 4.3 What's the point?

For some, there is a sense of futility that, even if they were to risk speaking out, their words would fall on deaf ears. "I question its worth if no one is listening or acting on recommendations being made for over 20 years" said one. Another gave an example: "We are constantly told that learning disabled artists are represented amongst disability specific funding programmes, festivals, commissions etc, but this is not the case. When we challenge this - and provide specific examples - we are shut down and met with defensive responses, rather than constructive conversation."

Another respondent, who felt an organisation's pay structure and practices around upskilling and progressing employees felt exploitative, tried to raise this but met with a response of "we're not responsible / our hands are tied". They said: "You can feel pretty de-motivated and deterred from speaking out and challenging opinions and practices you feel are unethical because of the lack of action and dismissive response."

#### 4.4 Organisational control

Others are simply instructed by their organisations as to what they can and can't say – including in a personal capacity. One employee said: "I have been told to curb my social media posting as it is not policy to express any political opinion. This is not the first organisation where this has happened." Another said: ". . . it has been explicitly relayed



to me that I cannot express myself freely at all, and that addressing some topics publicly, such as Brexit, would lead to a disciplinary procedure.”

It's possible that the more powerful the organisation, the less freedom is afforded to employees. A respondent at “a large funding institution” said: “. . . there is a strong steer that as we represent the organisation we are only to share corporately agreed opinions. . . I don't feel I can trust my employer to have my back if I express a personal opinion.” They also described Chatham House Rule meetings as “an unhelpful wielding of power [which] provide a forum for unprofessional conduct that can't be challenged.”

Behind such curbing of employees' freedom to speak lie fears for the impact on – and reputation of – the organisations themselves. One comment said: “Difficult narratives – ones which may paint the institution, or its angle on a subject, in a bad light - are often avoided”. This poses problems for those who want to prompt action, such as the Director who said: “I would hope for venting in private where something can be done rather than in public, but I do see that if private expression receives no results, then public is necessary and support it.”

Another pointed out that being a charity places limits on what can be said publicly, “. . . and frankly, that's the trade-off for the various other benefits we receive.” But they went on to say: “There's then the contractual censorship from big public sector funders, which STINKS! It used to be a condition of support from Birmingham City Council, but I always crossed it out.”

Recognising that working for an organisation brings some responsibility for its long-

term survival – and the long-term stability of a community – was raised by some as an issue related to freedom of expression. “Does the ‘speaking out’ mean asking a question, or does it mean fundamentally disrupting or changing an organization? Or does it mean correcting or ‘tweaking’ a policy or program that has . . . negative impacts that may not have been considered? Not all protests stop to consider the organization as a moving, operating entity, that may be responsive to change.”

Causing problems for the wider sector was recognised as a potential outcome of speaking out by one respondent, who said they: “might feel cross about the Arts Council, because they've not funded something close to my heart, but I'm not going to talk about it publicly because (a) that would be unwise and (b) I don't know what pressure they're under so perhaps it would be unfair of me.”

#### **4.5 Honest conversations unwelcome**

Even critics – paid to give their opinions – are aware of the political and personal implications of doing so. “I regularly review theatre under a pseudonym as I may well want to work for one of these companies one day”, said one critic, while another described the pressures to give a favourable review: “A reviewer friend of mine, discussing a fairly tepid production at a large regional theatre, said “[my review] is only free advertising for them. No point being critical, they'll just bury it and won't ask me back. Just chuck on an extra star and pretend it wasn't just a night out of the house!” Whilst cynical, this attitude tends to ring true across all sectors of the industry and whilst I'm a firm believer in being positive and working to give one another encouragement, that shouldn't come at the expense of freedom of speech”.



It's a similar picture for consultants. One person spoke of writing a report about audience and the arts - revealing what audiences thought about local arts organisations. "The views were not positive and the local arts scene gave me stick!"

It is particularly tricky to have honest conversations with those who have perceived power and influence. "I am forced to watch my language and tone when delivering artistic criticism" said one, while another commented, "It's particularly difficult to have open artistic conversations if you know the artist well and they project a sense of entitlement or their own importance and aren't able to self-critique; this limits the artform."

This may be affected by gender, age, ethnicity and social class. "Polite, challenge-averse, middle-class, passive-aggressive and protectionist are some of the particularities of the funded arts sector", remarked one respondent. "For people not of middle-class English culture, finding the right way to say something so that it is heard takes up way too much time and energy."

Older people regularly commented on the freedom that their age and late career stage brings: "I am now in my 70s and so have nothing to lose, financially or otherwise, by speaking out. Older age can be liberating. And also provide decades of experience which allows 'historical' reference to examples and cases which younger arts workers may have not known about or forgotten."



Some women reported being intimidated or patronised, giving examples such as: "Not feeling that I could stand up to male trustees as a woman at board meetings when voices were being raised." Another commented "I find my opinions are often invalidated purely because I am a '50-year-old white, middle-class woman', others pre-supposing that my life has

been one without prejudice and therefore what could I possibly know about anything."

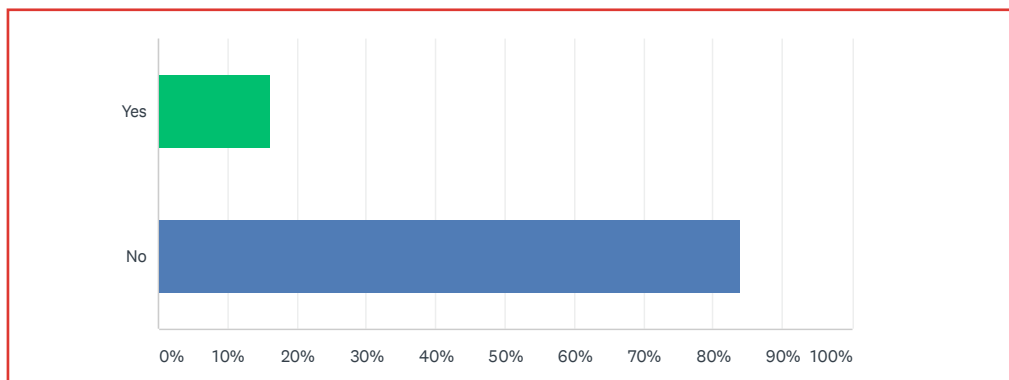
#### 4.6 Paid for silence

Among the more striking findings in the survey was the proportion of respondents who had been offered a settlement agreement or 'gagging order' under which an organisation offered to pay them an amount of money in return for their silence around circumstances they did not want to be made public. One in six respondents said this had happened to them, which suggests that paying people off is not an uncommon way in which the sector is controlling dissenting voices.

According to one respondent, non disclosure clauses are sometimes included in contracts issued to artists by England's National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) – an institutionalised block on free speech that one respondent described as "extraordinary in a public funding context".



**Q6 Have you ever been offered a 'settlement agreement' (commonly known as a 'gagging order') under which an organisation offered to pay you an amount of money in return for your silence around circumstances they did not want to be made public?**



"If you have been forced to sign an NDA [non-disclosure agreement] then you have no freedom" said one respondent, and a number indicated that they felt unable to share details of their settlements. But others gave some more details of the circumstances around their agreements.

One respondent reported being "offered money to keep quiet about corrupt practices in arts funding at the EU level"; a whistleblower told top management about mostly male bosses bullying their female subordinates and was paid off and invited to leave the organisation; another respondent accepted a "redundancy package when the redundancy wasn't wholly legal"; and one person reported "a gagging order regarding a

colleague's sexual harassment case and a Board's illegal processes".

When such a settlement is agreed, the person concerned can be forbidden from even divulging its existence. One respondent was informed that the board had 'lost confidence' in them and was invited to resign in exchange for a financial settlement. They explained: "I was required to sign a document that stated that I would not divulge the existence of the settlement, nor would I refer to its contents. I understand that similar agreements were made with other members of staff from time-to-time."

It appears that fear of whistleblowing is one of the factors that can prompt organisations to offer settlement agreements. One person reported: "A charity [was] using money meant for a project for disadvantaged groups to fund their own artistic endeavours. I was the reporting Director on the project and was told to lie about it. I was paid a lump sum of £10k not to go to the Charity Commission".

Other organisations make settlements part of their redundancy agreements, or to pay off those claiming constructive dismissal. One respondent said: "I was made redundant and the redundancy pay was dependent on signing a non-disclosure agreement – I knew about a lot of corrupt practices in the organisation but couldn't say anything about the mismanagement." Another reported: "They pushed me into a corner where myself and my senior colleagues were forced to look for work elsewhere. . . I signed a non disclosure agreement in exchange for a substantial payout on the basis of constructive dismissal."

Not everyone feels able to accept a settlement agreement they are offered and one

person said they had their “three days in court instead... which I won.” Others were uncomfortable about accepting one, but felt they have no alternative. One said: “Previously agreed payment was threatened to be withheld. It is very upsetting because my silence can be bought at a frighteningly low sum due to poverty and fear of ostracism.”

Staff may also feel uncomfortable about offering settlement agreements, but equally feel they have no choice. One respondent gave a detailed example: “I was the middle manager required to sort out a situation and ensure the settlement was signed and relations managed in such a way that nothing would become public. The situation involved bullying of production staff and stage management by an established theatre director. I was extremely uncomfortable with my part in this, but felt unable to voice my concerns fully for fear of losing my job and having my reputation damaged in what is at the end of the day a very small industry where it feels like everyone with power is connected. With a few years hindsight I wish I had spoken up more forcefully at the time and had found the confidence and support to act in line with my values.”

Sticks rather than carrots are clearly another means by which some organisations attempt to buy a person’s silence and some spoke of agreements involving threats rather than offers of cash: “I was not offered an actual cash payment but was told that my project (I am a consultant) would be cancelled, or my consultancy would be terminated”

said one respondent, while another reported being bullied “. . . to keep my silence by threatening me with legal action. And a woman involved in an HR investigation of sexual harassment in a university arts department wasn’t offered money herself, but the alleged perpetrator “was given a golden handshake and moved on to another position”. It was made clear to her that if

she wanted to keep her zero hours contract she would have to not speak out.

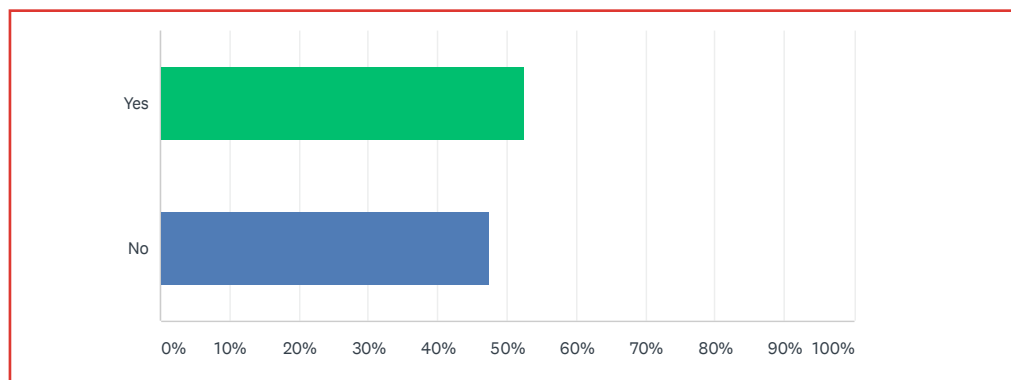




## 5.0 Who's applying the pressure?

Four out of five survey respondents agreed that 'Workers in the arts & cultural sector who share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised' and over half reported having felt 'pressurised, reprimanded, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person or on digital media, for speaking out about issues affecting the arts sector.'

**Q3 Have you ever felt pressurised, reprimanded, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person or on digital media, for speaking out about issues affecting the arts sector?**



Given the subject matter of the survey this may well over-represent the proportion of arts sector workers as a whole who have suffered in this way: an open access survey is likely to have been disproportionately answered by those who feel safer expressing

their views on an anonymous forum. But nonetheless the figure is high in the context of a sector that claims to value diversity. One person commented: "... outsiders can sometimes express utter astonishment to me about the sheer unpleasantness of a sector that is supposed to be about human plenitude. The arts sector has been compared unfavourably (in my hearing, and by people who should know) with sectors as notorious as property development and commercial litigation".

When individuals are put under pressure, it's far from certain that others will leap to their defence. One person, who reported being bullied and physically intimidated, said "it was difficult for me to get support for combating the behaviour that called it out as what it was – misogyny – because of the fear of reprisal from trans activists".

### 5.1 Pressure from within

Perhaps more surprising still is that the people most frequently cited as responsible for applying pressure are 'colleagues' – a response given by almost two-thirds. Some managers and employers in particular are silencing arts workers who speak their minds, but so are other organisations working in the sector. One respondent commented "An arts organisation loves to recruit someone enthusiastic, outspoken and confident, but then they start to feel threatened by the same attributes further down the line".

Sometimes pressure takes the form of direct threats of sanctions for expressing personal views. One respondent reports it was made "very clear to staff across the organisation I work for that we would face disciplinary procedures if we expressed ourselves on Brexit – including European nationals whose right to work in the institution might be



affected in the coming months. Likewise, it is clear to everyone that we cannot be seen as critical of the government's actions and policies. Staff were also told they could not join Extinction Rebellion protests." Another was told to remove a personal tweet which criticised a lack of diversity in a BBC Proms season, even though their Twitter profile contained no information linking them to their employer: "My employer told me that I would face disciplinary action if I did not comply."

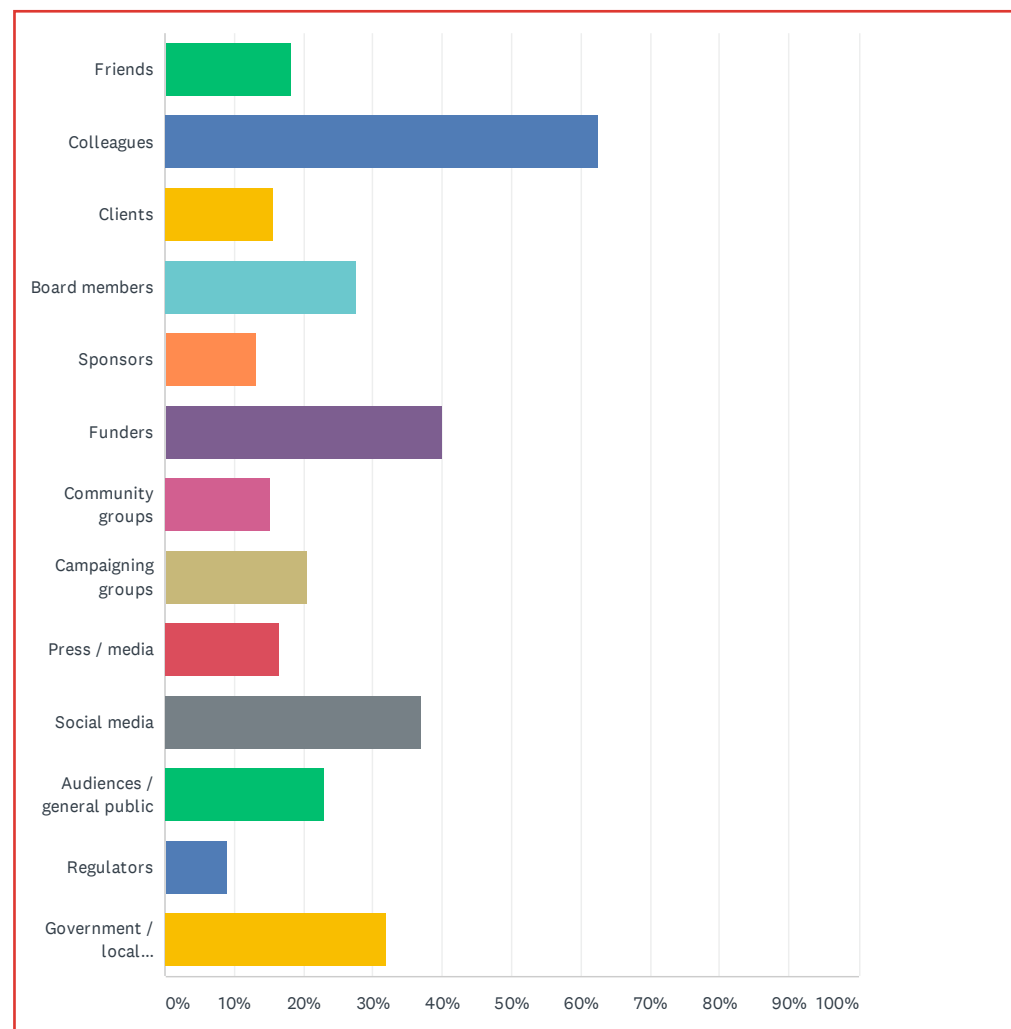
Less threatening but equally disturbing is a comment by another respondent who said: "I have tried to raise concerns about the context in which colleagues (both within and without the organisation) are working but have been 'Sent to Coventry' and had conversations simply shut down if entering into territory that questions the status quo."

Examples of pressures from within the sector, but outside respondents' own organisations, also appear to be widespread, and only 39% of survey respondents agreed that 'Personal views and opinions are met with respect by others working in the arts & cultural sector'. One person said they had been "advised by a high-profile venue programmer to watch how I talk about certain things, that I have burnt bridges by standing up with integrity for what I believe in. I've been told that 'it's only dance in the end' so not to rock the boat."

Those pressures may come from groups as well as individuals: "In my local community it feels like if you work with the wrong organisation you won't get support from the others in the area. It feels very much like Mean Girls locally – "oh, you worked on that project with X, so we'll ignore your requests for support on this new project that doesn't involve X" or "if you work with us you can't work with Y" etc. Which as a freelancer is extremely damaging."



#### Q4 From which of the following have you felt this pressure? (tick all that apply)





## 5.2 Trustees

Boards and trustees may lean on an organisation's Executive to act in a certain way and apply sanctions for speaking out. One director reports being "pressured to hide or perhaps not completely reveal facts from other board members so as not to involve them completely all the while, in my opinion, jeopardizing the organisation. In the end, I revolted against this and my position was not renewed."

Speaking up about board behaviour was a problem for another respondent who wrote to individual trustees saying the public story being told about how the board had acquired control of a newly built flagship venue and its associated ACE revenue funding was "seriously distorted". They were told that "just like most cultural institutions [the organisation] had been constituted in such a way that makes it exempt from needing to respond to any freedom of information requests".

But there can also be pressures for trustees to keep their views to themselves. One respondent "expressed and advocated views and practices that were perceived as heretical by other board members. I was put under severe pressure through individual meetings, phone calls, emails and then being hauled up before key board members and basically kicked off."

## 5.3 Sponsors and donors

Fears exist that cultural organisations may also be under pressure from sponsors and one respondent noted that "care is required where making comments that somehow affect revenue streams (funding, income, sponsorship etc)." But only 13% said they had

experienced this type of pressure.

One reported "sponsors or individual givers placing undue pressure [on organisations] to use their services" and another described sponsors as potentially "constraining and damaging to the integrity of a project, distorting the nature of the work presented".

But this same person recognised that money from corporate sponsorship can actually be "far more liberating than Arts Council or other forms of grant funding which are hedged around with conditions and criteria, including a lot of informal constraints on what is approved and not approved by the funders."

## 5.4 Funders

The belief that it is important not to upset funders by publicly criticising their actions appears to be widely held. Three-quarters of respondents agreed that 'Dependence on public funding discourages open discussion about important issues'; 69% said they would not publicly criticise the actions of funders for fear that it would jeopardise future funding, and 40% reported having been subject to pressure from funders for having spoken out. One said: "It seems that if you do this you are branded as a 'traitor' and giving support and fuel to their detractors."

Attempts by individuals to hold funders to account are responsible for some of that pressure. Someone who did just that reported: "In 2017 . . . arts funding and state support for the creative industries had failed to diversify – particularly in terms of class – either the audience or the workforce. . . A couple of National Campaign for the Arts type people told me that I shouldn't be allowed to say stuff like that (!) and an ACE

director told me my comments were ‘very unhelpful at this difficult time.’”

Others too have been advised to remain silent “so as not to develop a reputation for being difficult” and one was told “think carefully in future before submitting information to DCMS Select Committee Enquiries that might be seen as critical of (specifically) ACE”.

These issues don’t just apply to national funders, and one person remarked: “Freedom of speech is very much curtailed when working for or funded by a local authority, for fear of upsetting one’s masters.” Local government organisations may apply pressure for different reasons, sometimes political. One person reported their council “wanting programmes to reflect their policies but not question them. I was told in [no] uncertain terms that my organisation will never get access to a Council owned community space because of opposing political views.”

Another example given was of local councillors with a pro-Brexit stance putting pressure on a council team leading a European Capital of Culture campaigning bid to pull out. The person said: “We continued to put out messages of support but they had to be very carefully crafted to avoid trolling and we offered advice to our network members to keep themselves safe as we anticipated negative comments.”

But whilst funders do come in for a lot of criticism for stifling free speech, this is not universal. One respondent said: “I have spoken out about whatever I feel important to speak out about – this has led to a sense of isolation at times and my work sometimes being disregarded by ‘mainstream’ critics and sometimes by gatekeepers such as festival and venue programmers as not ‘proper’ art, but never by my local authority (be that Edinburgh, Fife, Brent or Camden) or by funders such as the Arts Council, Scottish Screen and Creative Scotland – who have encouraged freedom of speech and



supported bold statements.”

## 5.5 Campaigning and pressure groups

Campaigning groups can exert pressure on individuals and organisations to encourage them to restrict others’ freedom of speech. One respondent gave the example of a book and Q&A event with George Galloway and Ken Livingstone that was subject to a concerted campaign from Manchester Jewish groups to try and get the event cancelled. They said: “I was called several times over a weekend and we were bombarded with emails and social media messages accusing us of supporting Anti-Semitism. The Chairman wanted to cancel the event with less than a week to go and it was only the fact that i pointed out that we could be sued for cancellation that he relented and allowed the event to take place.” The same organisation was lobbied by LGBT campaigners to cancel a Germaine Greer book event, and this person commented: “This is becoming a regular feature of any event that is with someone who can be considered to have offended a section of society.”

## 5.6 Social media

Just over two-thirds of respondents said ‘the potential for hostile social media reactions makes me hesitant to share my opinions online’, and some of those who have used social media to express their views have suffered negative consequences as a result.

Often the abuse is, as one respondent pointed out, “led from the ‘bottom up’ rather than imposed by administrators, directors or managers (though these often get involved)”. They said: “The arrival of the phenomenon of social media-driven witch-hunting of artists who express unpopular views has had chilling effect on artists, critics, curators, academics and others. The worst aspect of these campaigns. . . has been in their explicit targeting of individuals’ livelihoods: freelance artists’ teaching gigs, academics’ teaching



posts, disinviting artists groups from having a public platform through which they might access commercial opportunities”.

Organisations as well as individuals are targets for abuse. One told of its Twitter account being targeted by trolls on several occasions, “usually angry white men or older women who believe our policies around positive discrimination and positive action are part of a conspiracy against them”. Another said: “. . . the Theatre is attacked on social media whenever we have a book event with someone who has expressed political or social views. We were also subject to a campaign from the mother of a member of staff who was made redundant - we ignored her and she eventually stopped posting.”

Some have learned from experience that expressing views on social media leaves them vulnerable. One person reported: “I engaged once with what I now understand to be trolling on Twitter by an artist that had questions about what I was doing – but rather than ask me made a snidey social media comment. My engagement with responding provoked an onslaught of ugly comments. I have never done this again.” It’s not a unique experience. Another commented: “When calling out online trolling and bullying of local musicians I had to deal with a lot of trolling myself.”

But another chooses not to discuss major issues or issues that relate to specific people or organisations on social media: “I would expect to be trolled if I did, but the main reason I would keep it offline is about more effectively achieving the goal of resolving the issues.”

## 5.7 Public

It’s not just social media that closes down public debate though. The public can shut

down free speech in other ways and personal attacks on staff can aim to influence the policies of their organisations. One respondent commented “Everyone seems to feel free to share their opinions, comments, criticisms about what we do institutionally or what I do as the Director of an art museum / gallery personally. This ranges from the type of car I drive, where I live or should live, what I post on my own social media (which is now limited to generic information on the arts, galleries I visit and the occasional cute photo of my dog - but never anything more personal), who I associate with and what I say or don’t say to the media. I often feel like I am constantly being policed.”

This is echoed by another respondent, who had attempted to build a new theatre locally, and was “verbally abused by a stranger in a supermarket due to it, as my face was in a local magazine in association with the project; as well [as] at a family non-work-related event by a member of the public”.

Some organisations face pressures from community members “who don’t really support the organization or even attend but feel entitled to criticize and complain about what they like and don’t like, or what we / I do or don’t do”, said another. In their experience of local government museums and galleries “a very small amount of adverse public comment can lead to censorship, withdrawal of exhibits, unnecessary signage etc. . . . There is a culture of inviting and then overreacting to complaints when in fact they represent a tiny proportion of views.

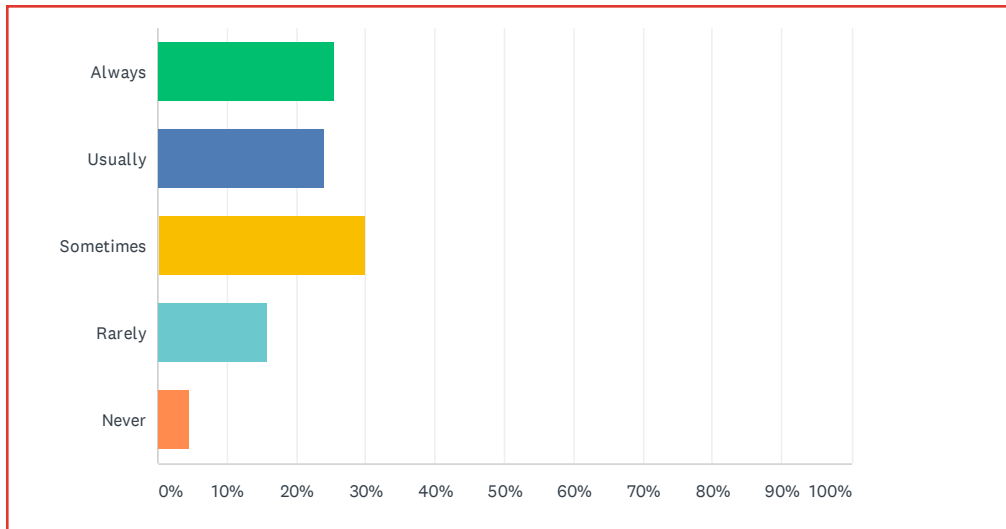
And pressure can be felt even at the individual level. One person commented that they are: “Afraid to publicly complain about the struggle artists face for fear of being told to ‘get a proper job’ amongst many other things.”



## 6.0 Artistic freedom of expression

Two-thirds of responses to the survey were given by people who create or present artistic work, many of whom gave graphic descriptions of the pressures on their artistic freedom of expression.

### Q11 Do you weigh up the risk of controversy when planning your artistic or creative activities?

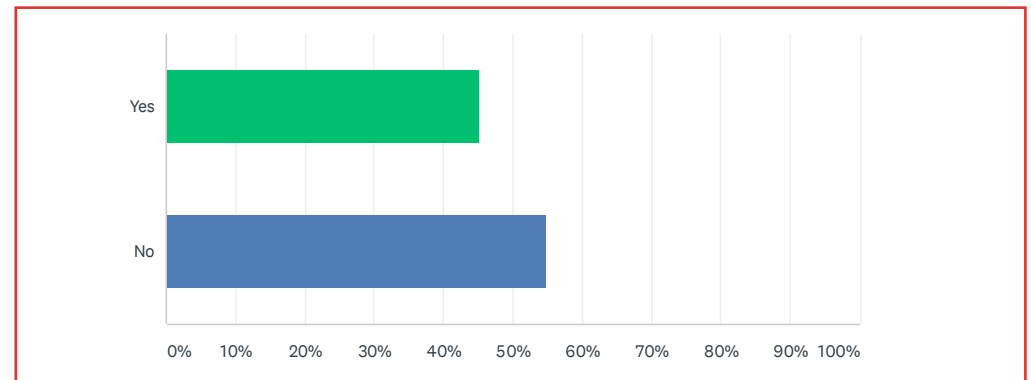


Half of those involved in this type of work 'always' or 'usually' weigh up the risk of controversy when planning their artistic or creative activities, and only 1 in 20 never do this.

Almost half (45%) have felt 'pressurised, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person

or on digital media', in reaction to their artistic and creative activities.

### Q12 Have you ever felt pressurised, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person or on digital media, in reaction to your artistic and creative activities?



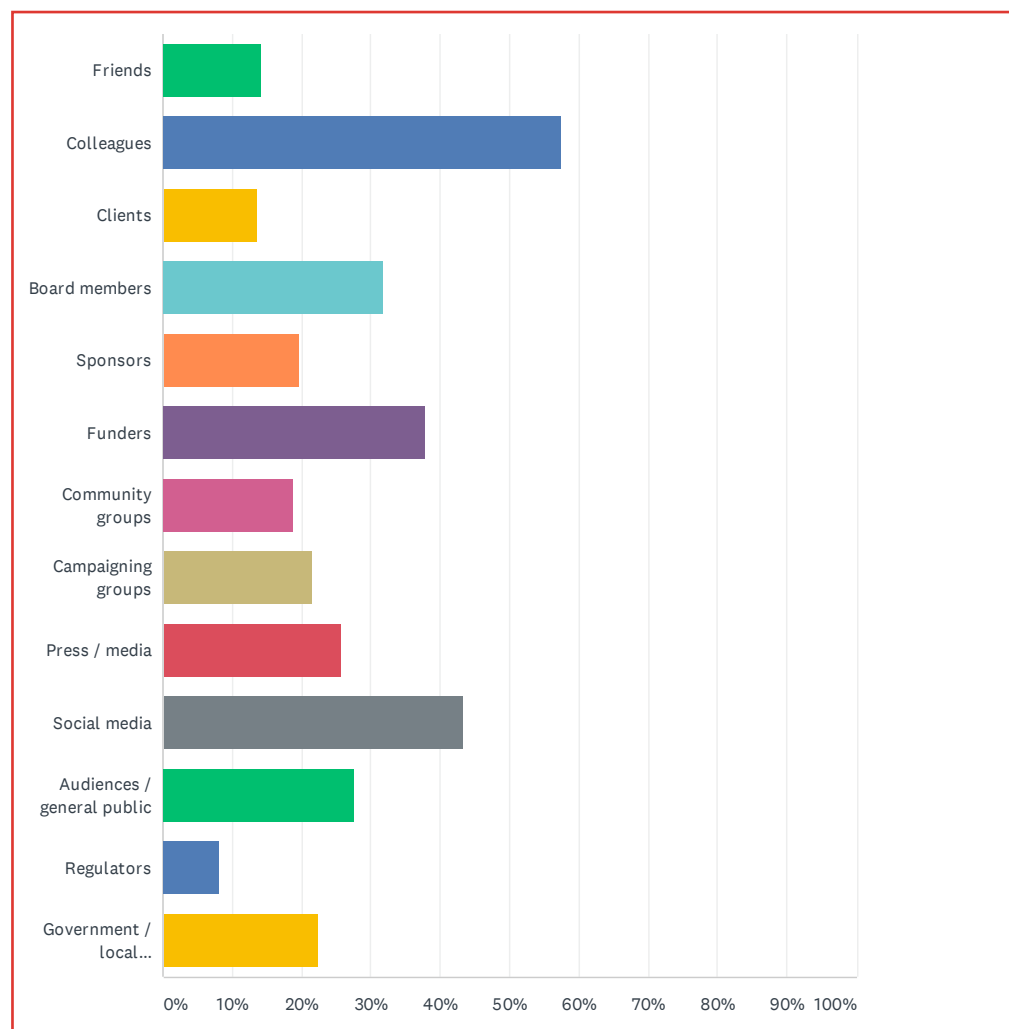
The circumstances around these are varied and often relate to the views of an organisation's board or senior management, or what they feel is acceptable to the public or to funders. 57% of those who had felt pressure related to their artistic and creative work cited colleagues as the source of this – significantly more than the 43% that had experienced pressure through social media or the 37% through funders.



### Q14 From which of the following have you felt under pressure? (tick all that apply)

It's important to note that not everyone believes that universal exercising of artistic freedom of expression is by definition a good thing, and some feel that self censorship is acceptable or even desirable. One respondent commented: "I have been struggling with and possibly self censoring over a couple of issues for some time, trying to resolve this artistically to prevent my work being misrepresented." Another said recognising that artistic work is "for others and not for 'us'" means it should be accessible in terms of its themes/language and interpretation.

For those who choose to self censor, this may be linked to 'appropriateness': "if it doesn't feel right to exhibit in a locale it probably isn't. . . The biggest issue is always how the arts . . . perceives its clientele especially as you go more regional or in tourist areas. They have an expectation of conformity". Another person who self-censors commented "I would not want vulnerable people, children for example to see some of my work without interpretation or safeguards in place. I collaborate with organisations and individuals to explore how we can expose people to controversial work to generate thought, discussion, positive action, knowing some of the things I do will result in revulsion, distaste, confusion, anger. This is intentional. When showing work I consider context."



## 6.1 The nature of pressure

Perhaps the most powerful influence of all on free artistic expression is public reaction, which not only affects artists but also influences the decisions of those who commission and programme them.

“Critical/abusive tweets and FB posts from members of the public about events the organisation was running” was cited by one respondent as a source of pressure, and this reflected the experiences of very many.

One person gave details of a particularly hostile public response to a community art installation, which despite all precautions being taken to avoid controversy, led to offensive complaints, including through official channels. The respondent explained that the installation involved creating “an intricate and very large knitted poppy display to mark the centenary of the end of WW1”. What happened is worth reproducing in full:

“Roughly 8000 people across the borough were involved to knit 35000 poppies which resulted in a 38-piece display across the town hall behind the towns war memorial (I work in Culture as part of a borough council who own the theatre I work for). The display hosted the words ‘They fell with their faces to the foe. Lest We Forget. 1914 – 1918’, accompanied by a cascade of 35 poppies, all created from knitted poppies made by the community. The display was beautiful and was predominantly well received. As we are a

local public body, we are incredibly cautious about public facing work and

all ‘i’s’ are dotted and ‘t’s’ crossed. A lot of time and consideration was taken in the creation of the final design, which was contingent on how many poppies were finally reacted.

Extensive planning permission was sort and obtained, as well as consultation with the Borough’s war memorial committee. However, despite this there was a local public backlash about



the final display being ‘disrespectful’, ‘tasteless and tacky’, ‘a waste of public time and money’, ‘defacing a listed building’ and, my favourite, ‘fake news’ by members of the public. Complaints were lodged through official channels, as well as directly to me through Facebook and twitter as I had been mentioned/thanked for my involvement in the project as well as photos I had shared myself online of the work. I received offensive private messages from ‘friends of friends’ online and much negative twitter trolling for the display. This was a massive shame. especially as the project has gone on to win awards and was widely praised.”

The pressure this type of reaction places on organisations is very evident in other responses. One person said their organisation strives “to be ‘uncontroversial’ or at least to not ‘offend’ and will react negatively or unsupportively should it receive even one negative comment.” Another felt “under pressure to be seen to present ‘politically’ and what is perceived as being ‘the right thing’ (or left!)”.

Going “beyond accepted narrative” is difficult in the UK, according to one respondent, who “gave up creating works in 2012 as I found it impossible to find a place to exhibit those work... Recently I managed to exhibit in Denmark, but that is much freer country. The Police protects artists there.”

Several people gave specific examples of pressure from within organisations. “The director . . . has decided to ban nude paintings arguing they are too controversial and [do] not follow his political orientation” reported one respondent, while another faced problems in the context of “images used by LGTB artists that were misunderstood by straight workers”.

One referred to a “personally traumatic” incident of pressure to remove certain references within a family production; one spoke of “a TV audition, where the director wanted me to produce the racial stereotype (caricature)”; someone else explained “when raising



the need for a gender balance on a project I was forced to back down by the director and writer”; and another said: “My agent has made it clear to me that certain plots or characters would be unacceptable because they might be considered ‘right wing.’”

Differing views on equality were at the root of difficult conversations for several respondents. One reported a producing venue pushing for “ethnically diverse casting, when the piece was very specifically exploring British white working class toxic masculinity. I faced scrutiny for creating something with an all male cast, when my previous two productions had all female casts.” For funders, this was unacceptable: “Presenting the white working class history of a white working class population in an overwhelming white working class location was considered by funders to not be sufficiently diverse”.

Accusations of ‘cultural appropriation’ deterred some from presenting their work. One person said “A current project - in development for nearly 10 years - threatens to be . . . killed at source - purely on the grounds of belligerent cultural appropriation insinuations and new rules about what I - as a white female - am now allowed to depict or write about and what I’m not supposed to go anywhere near i.e. nothing except my direct personal experiences”. And a white man commented: “Making cross cultural work . . . means I am always in danger of being labelled as appropriating, rather than sharing, exploring and celebrating inter-cultural relationships and differences.”

Almost as common as comments on internal pressure to produce and present work in specific ways were comments on the influence of funders. Local authorities were the subject of several criticisms. One respondent reported being “banned from programming

an outdoor comedy about parking, because this would be ‘acknowledging that there is a parking issue in the borough’”, and being placed under intense scrutiny because a production “talked about knife crime, and Councillors refused to acknowledge it was relevant to their borough.” Another explained that “members of a local council-based organisation objected to our satirical artwork about President Trump and demanded it’s removal for being political.”

The comments suggest that the involvement of local authorities in artistic decisions can provoke serious tensions, and one person reported “Councillors expressing personal opinions in rude and offensive manners with no basis in truth, and a refusal to apologise when caught out.” They also reported a “lack of support from Board Members and councillors when the above happened.” This particular incident also spilled over into social media, with “a local councillor posting offensive and inflammatory remarks regarding decisions taken by myself and colleagues”.

Other sources of pressure on creative freedom of expression mentioned included:

- **Participants:** “He happily posted (false) statements about the programme and the events ran as part of it, on social media, whipping up attention from other people”.
- **Parents of participants:** “ [I] make work with young people and pressure from parents regarding content can be insidious or extreme, depending on the show.”
- **Partners:** “I often have to water down opinion in project writing and have had to extract some religious references even when present in submitted writing.”
- **Sponsors:** can be “constraining and damaging to the integrity of a project,



distorting the nature of the work presented. In my experience drinks brands are especially guilty of this, subordinating everything to their so-called ‘brand values.’”

- **Local stakeholders:** “military and conservative local government in a garrison town when producing an anti-war exhibition” was one example; and another cited “programming arts in a Christian church. They (the church goers) did not want the contemporary dance planned for a site specific commission.”
- **Journalists:** “when tangling with the press over a thorny subject (the theme of a production my company was touring) and seeing a totally false but sensational article in a national newspaper, I contacted the Press Council and said I would take action unless and until there was a printed apology which I could then show funders, receiving venues etc.”

## 6.2 Fighting back?

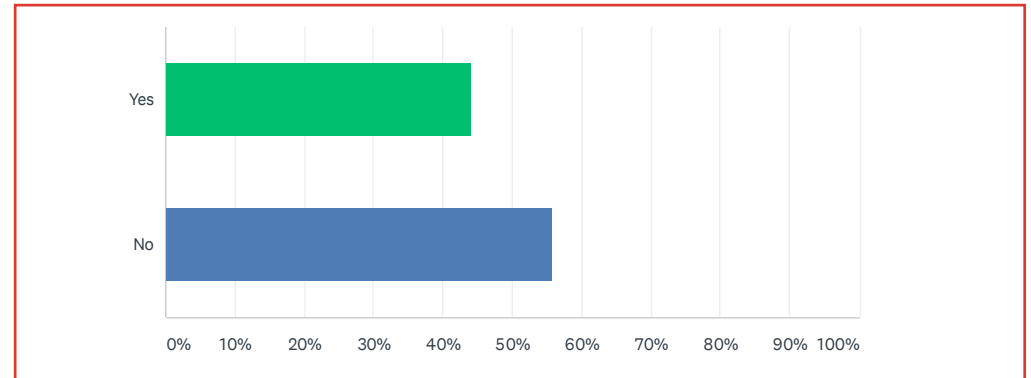
Of those who reported experiencing pressures related to their artistic work, 44% said they had changed their product, programming or plans due to this pressure.

But doing so is clearly a source of great angst for some. Although some are “ambivalent about caving in to pressure”, one respondent, unhappy about doing so, summed up why pragmatism sometimes rules: “It is a matter of picking battles. I sometimes have to weigh whether what I really need to say requires the element that will turn others away.

If it is important to me, I will stick to my plan, but sometimes, it is not the most important thing and I choose to tame my ideas. I have felt like a traitor to my own self-expression, but I have to ask if anyone needs to hear from me at all”.



## Q15 Have you ever changed your artistic product, programming or plans due to this type of pressure?



The reasons cited for responding to pressure were many and varied – some of them practical, others personal.

Often the reasons related to money and the cost of not responding to pressure was a common theme. “Altering projects to ‘meet boxes for funding’ within my area” was given as a reason by one, and another echoed this: “The project I was implementing didn’t fall under a ‘category’ for support, so to help aid the project to be held in that area [it was] changed to suit them rather than what I devised”. Others cited the costs of protecting an organisation or individual in the face of a potentially hostile reaction. The “decision [was] taken out of my hands. [I was] told the organisation (small, financially precarious) couldn’t afford a potential backlash” said one. And in another case “the risks of protest and costs of protecting people were too high for organisation to take on.”

Reputational risk was also given as a reason for bowing to pressure: “it was decided to be too much of a reputational risk to continue the project in case something went wrong and the project was targeted by trans activists”, explained one person, who saw



the international transfer of a play cancelled. Another described how a festival brochure was delayed for weeks by the senior management because it contained “the picture of a dildo. . . and it promoted a show called ‘Old people, Die, Die, Die!’. The organisation was funded by the Council, worried that these 2 shows would upset our masters since they had already complained about 2 shows the previous year. In the end we had to ask one company to change their image, and the other to change their show title (!), which I felt undermined our professional credibility with artists”.

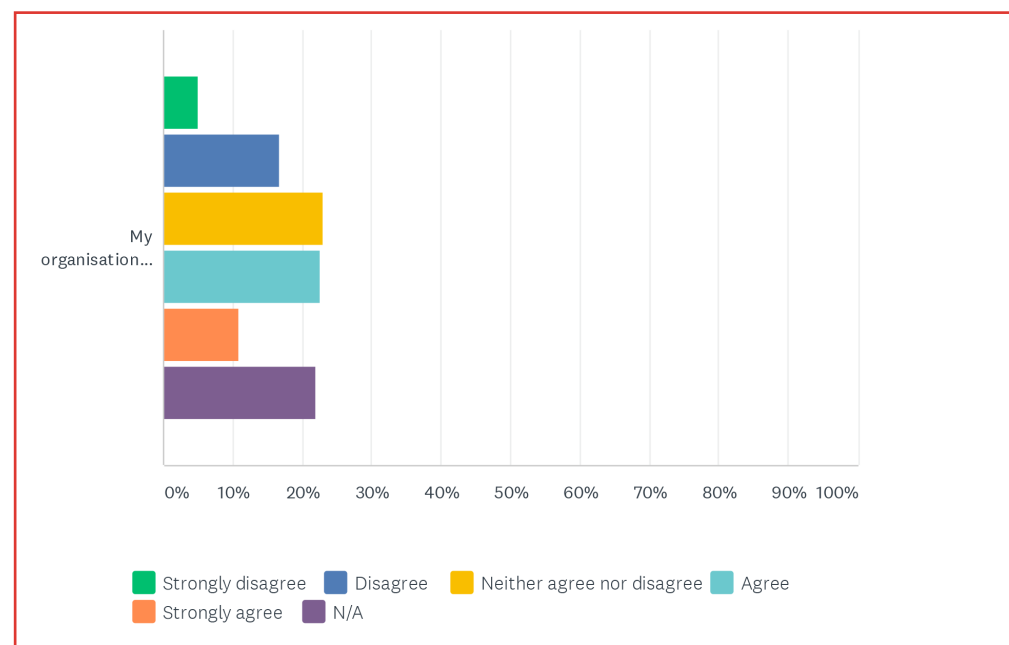
In general, although 4 out of 5 respondents agreed that ‘organisations that won’t risk controversy won’t deliver the most exciting creative work’, they also recognised the pressure that organisations can be put under, and only a third felt their boards were being “unduly cautious about creative work they perceive to be potentially controversial”.

In some cases these pressures were simply felt to be too overwhelming to resist. “We were going to build a new theatre, as our present one is no longer fit for purpose” explained one respondent. “After 5 years of planning and £11 million spent on its development, due to a small public outcry, small but loud protests and MANY personal attacks (physical and digital) to members of staff and council over the project, the theatre development has been abandoned.”

But in other cases, people felt arguing simply wasn’t worth the effort. One person commented that it was easier to give in to pressure than to fight “a battle that I did not want to fight, that I did not feel was warranted by my perspective on the subject. I would rather get on with making things”. This was echoed by the comment: “Any attempts to defend my position fell on deaf ears. In the grand scheme of things I did not

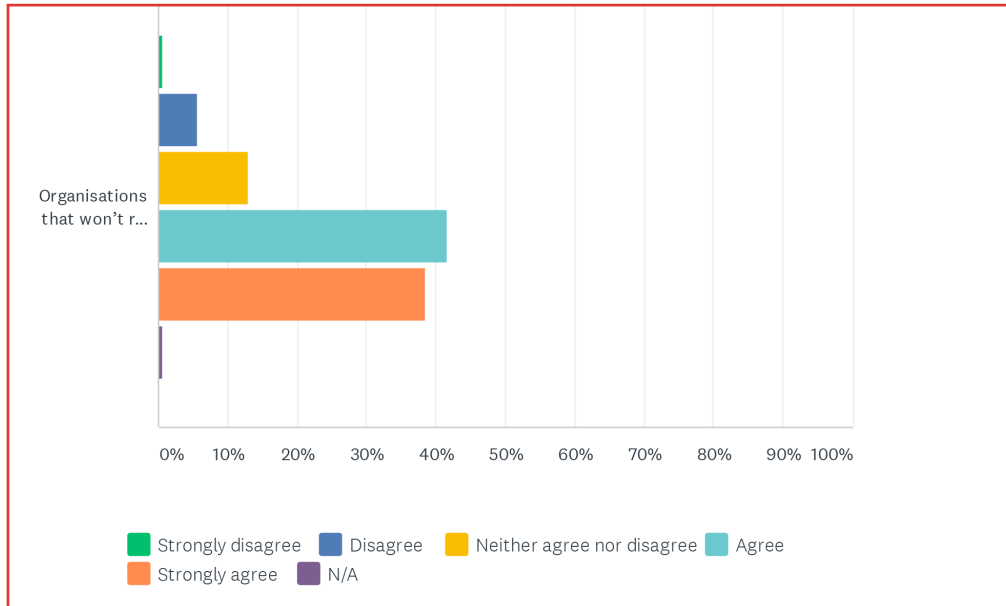
feel it was worth taking a stand.”

### **My organisation’s board of directors is unnecessarily cautious about creative work they perceive to be potentially controversial.**



Personal reasons for giving in to pressure were dominated by fear of upsetting others – “Because I like to please people overly, I think!” said one person. But others were fearful for more troubling reasons. Fear of “professional repercussion” was one reason given, and “fear of being deliberately misinterpreted and categorised” was another. Reasons

**Organisations that won't risk controversy won't deliver the most exciting creative work.**



“When I joined, the venue regularly booked Roy Chubby Brown, Kevin Bloody Wilson, Jim Davidson and their ilk. I immediately banned them all. I had a really unpleasant conversation with Jim’s agent who was really unhappy, and there was a bit of media backlash. Way before social media I am glad to say, this was nearly 20 years ago. One redtop headline read “NAME OF VENUE plonkers ban our Jim”. I’m very proud of that, it’s on my wall. I had some members of staff and volunteers, and audience members, and even board members, who objected to my decision. I told them I was not willing to give a platform to sexist racist homophobic disablist comedians, and if other venues in the town wanted to book them, they could go and see them there, but they would not see them on any stage that I was responsible for.”

like “to keep my job” and “it’s ‘fall in line’ or lose the commission” reveal that the stakes can be very high for those who refuse to bow to pressure. One person summarised the problem: “There is a lot of art content I would like to put out there but I won’t, for fear of repercussions and impact on my art, career, family and future funding.”



Nonetheless, not everyone felt compelled to make changes and 56% of those who had experienced pressures to change their artistic plans had not done so. Some gave details of resisting pressure and standing up to critics. A CEO of a large producing and presenting organisation told a story to illustrate:



## 7.0 Conclusions

Such is the range of comments expressed by respondents to this survey that any attempt to summarise the key themes will do a disservice to those that are, for reasons of brevity, not mentioned. Yet it is possible to offer tentative responses to four key questions:

### 7.1 Do arts professionals speak their minds?

The overarching response to this must surely be 'no', though it depends on the nature of a comment and the context in which someone would like to make it. It's not so much censorship that prevents views being aired, rather fear of the consequences of speaking out on some subjects. Self-censorship is the self-defence mechanism being used in response.

Of course, it's not only the cultural sector where people feel unable to speak out on what matters to them. Whatever they believe, you won't hear many church-goers admitting to the vicar that they favour assisted dying or corporate lawyers telling their bosses they think they're overpaid. But the pressures on arts workers to keep their views to themselves reveal a troubling set of double standards at the heart of a sector that believes it is owed artistic freedom but doesn't tolerate freedom of expression within its own ranks. It's time for this to come out in the open.

### 7.2 What is left unspoken?

Summarising the opinions that people would be wise to keep to themselves is a slightly ad hoc process that fails to do justice to the many and varied circumstances when individuals have experienced a backlash for having expressed their views. Nonetheless,

the conclusion must surely be that there is a pervasive received ideology across the sector and publicly stating opinions outside of certain norms is widely thought to be a career-breaker.

It's unsurprising to find evidence of left-leaning political viewpoints dominating the discourse, but it is depressing to read of intolerance shown towards those with other political views. This is particularly worrying because the alternative viewpoint is held by a large proportion of voters in the UK. Such intolerance raises unwanted questions about the legitimacy of public funding.

More surprising are the range of other topics that are considered to be out of bounds within the sector. People of faith are being labelled with stereotypes; discussion of gender identity has become a no-go area; and open conversations about the meaning and value of diversity are being all but extinguished. Hierarchical power structures within arts organisations appear to be contributing to the problem. In a tight-knit community where reputation is arguably more valuable than expertise, stepping beyond expected norms of speech or behaviour is dangerous. It is, therefore, unsurprising that complaints of sexual harassment, bullying and exploitation are seldom aired in places where action could be taken to stop it.

### 7.3 Why don't people speak out?

The research found that sometimes people don't speak out for sensitivity to a situation or fear of hurting someone's feelings. That's often understandable, sometimes laudable, but also potentially dangerous if it protects those wishing to censor debate or those incapable of dealing with honest feedback. Public derision of this has led to the term 'snowflake', but the right path to take on it must surely be determined on a case by case basis.

This, however, is not the primary deterrent to free speech. It is fear of consequences that sits at the heart of self-censorship in the sector. The brave, the naïve, the powerful and the free are being heard, while the rest are muted for justifiable fears of a hostile reception. Contractual workers will find it particularly difficult to speak out, occupying as they do a weak negotiating position vis a vis the organisations that could employ them in roles for which there is stiff competition.

Indeed, organisations' ability to hire and fire people in a sector where supply of workers outstrips demand in many disciplines, adds to the power imbalance. This in turn leads people to wonder what the point is of speaking out, given the inevitable outcome of [inquiries that find 'everyone is innocent'](#) because the reputation of the organisation is deemed more important than any injustice an individual may be facing.

The clearest evidence of organisations being gatekeepers of communication is when they pay for silence using contractual devices including non-disclosure agreements. When evidence emerges of potentially criminal activity being covered up using pay-offs and gagging clauses, the time has come to re-examine this widespread practice which is used and [tacitly endorsed](#) by some funders, as well as those they fund.

#### 7.4 Who's applying the pressure?

An aspect of self-censorship of particular concern is the source of the pressures on free speech. We might expect the sector to be wary of sharing their opinions of those who have power over them, such as funders and others they rely on for their livelihoods. Also, we have learned by now – often from personal experience – that social media can silence even the bravest of those who are willing to stand up and be counted. But it is deeply disturbing to find that colleagues are the ones most likely to leave arts professionals fearful of



speaking openly. If the sector is committed to diversity, it will need to heed this finding more than any other.

Public opinion and pressure groups are also silencing debate in unhelpful but understandable ways – often related to money. Councillors in fear of losing their seats, CEOs faced with policing bills, sponsors fearing for their reputations and trustees who carry legal responsibility for an organisation's activities can all apply pressures that will put the brakes on artists expressing controversial or politically sensitive viewpoints in their work.

What this does is lead us to the very final conclusion that it is time for everyone working in the cultural sector to take a long hard look in the mirror. If Freedom of Expression is a fundamental human right and stands as a pillar of democracy – particularly at a time when democratic principles are under threat in so many parts of the world – then speaking out is a duty, not a decision. It ultimately redresses power imbalances – though usually to the cost of those brave enough to get the conversations started. Failing to respect others' views is the hallmark of people living in an echo chamber – an accusation that is often levied at the cultural sector. It would be nice to have evidence to refute that. Sadly, this research doesn't provide it.





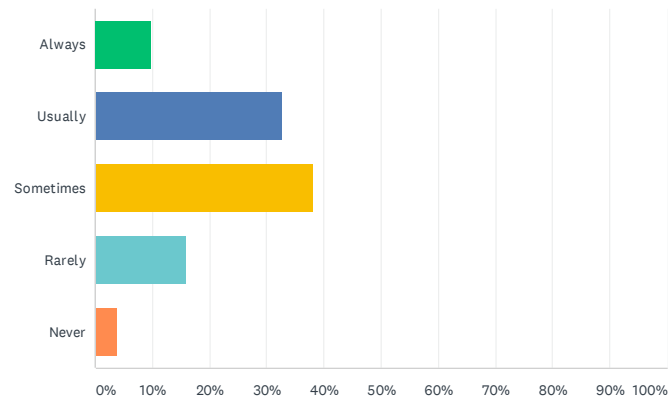
Appendix A  
Questionnaire and tabulated  
quantitative responses

Appendix B  
Open text responses

# Appendix A

Q1 Do you feel free to speak publicly (whether in person or on digital media) about your personal opinions on issues affecting the arts sector?

Answered: 512 Skipped: 1



Q2 Do you have any comments about freedom of speech in the arts & cultural sector?

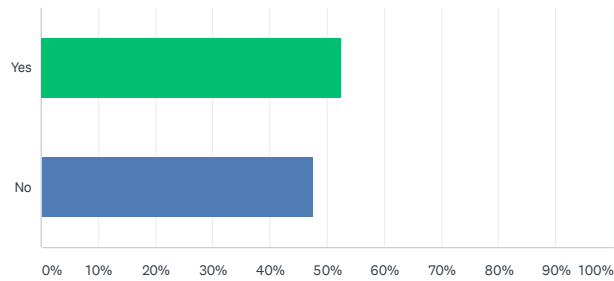
Answered: 297 Skipped: 216

See Appendix B – Q2 open text comments (p56)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	9.77% 50
Usually	32.62% 167
Sometimes	38.09% 195
Rarely	15.82% 81
Never	3.71% 19
TOTAL	512

Q3 Have you ever felt pressurised, reprimanded, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person or on digital media, for speaking out about issues affecting the arts sector?

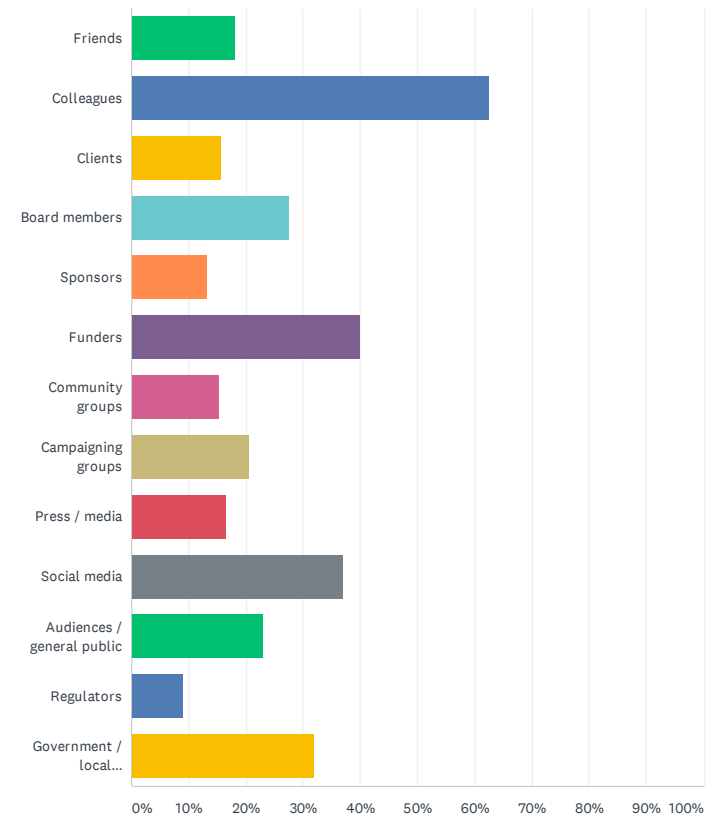
Answered: 505 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	52.48%	265
No	47.52%	240
TOTAL		505

Q4 From which of the following have you felt this pressure? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 243 Skipped: 270



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Friends	18.11%	44
Colleagues	62.55%	152
Clients	15.64%	38
Board members	27.57%	67
Sponsors	13.17%	32
Funders	39.92%	97
Community groups	15.23%	37
Campaigning groups	20.58%	50
Press / media	16.46%	40
Social media	37.04%	90
Audiences / general public	23.05%	56
Regulators	9.05%	22
Government / local government	32.10%	78
Total Respondents: 243		

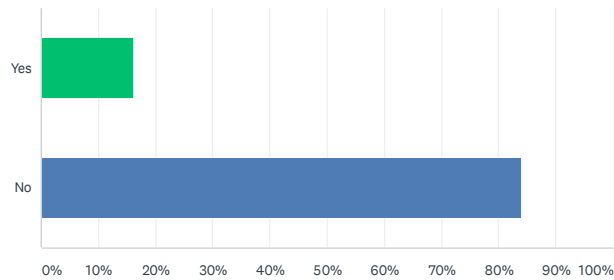
Q5 Please give more details of the type of pressure you have felt and the circumstances around this.

Answered: 157 Skipped: 356

See Appendix B – Q5 open text comments (p89)

Q6 Have you ever been offered a 'settlement agreement' (commonly known as a 'gagging order') under which an organisation offered to pay you an amount of money in return for your silence around circumstances they did not want to be made public?

Answered: 473 Skipped: 40



Q7 Please give more details of the circumstances around this settlement agreement.

Answered: 54 Skipped: 459

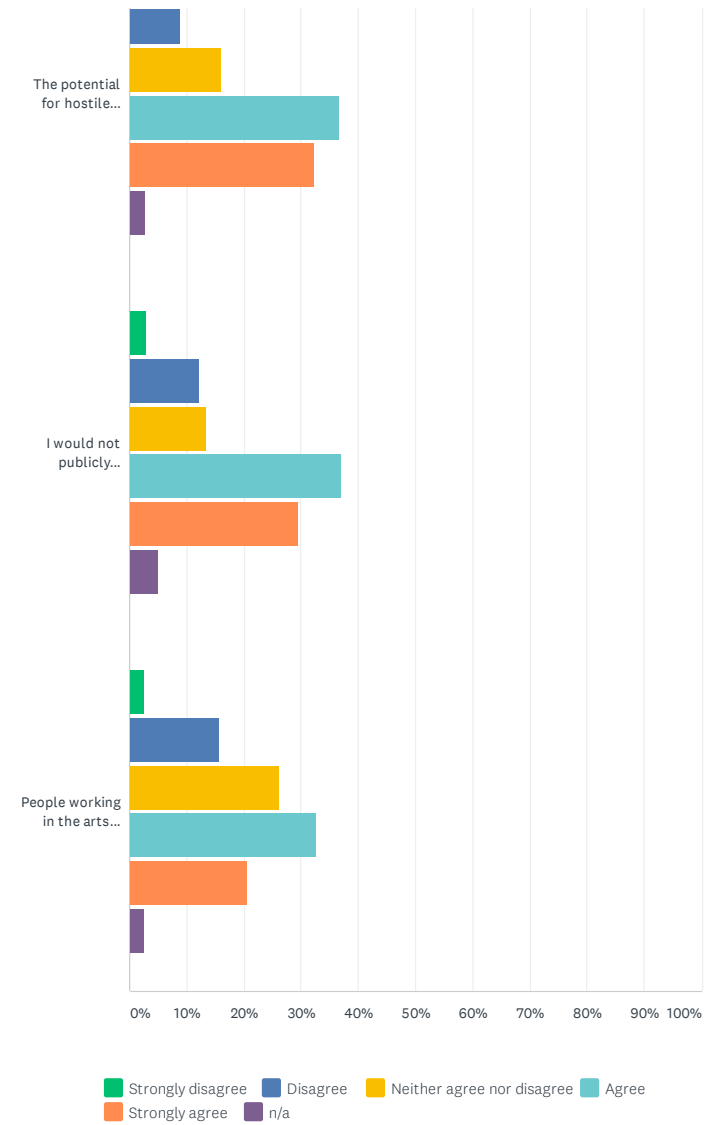
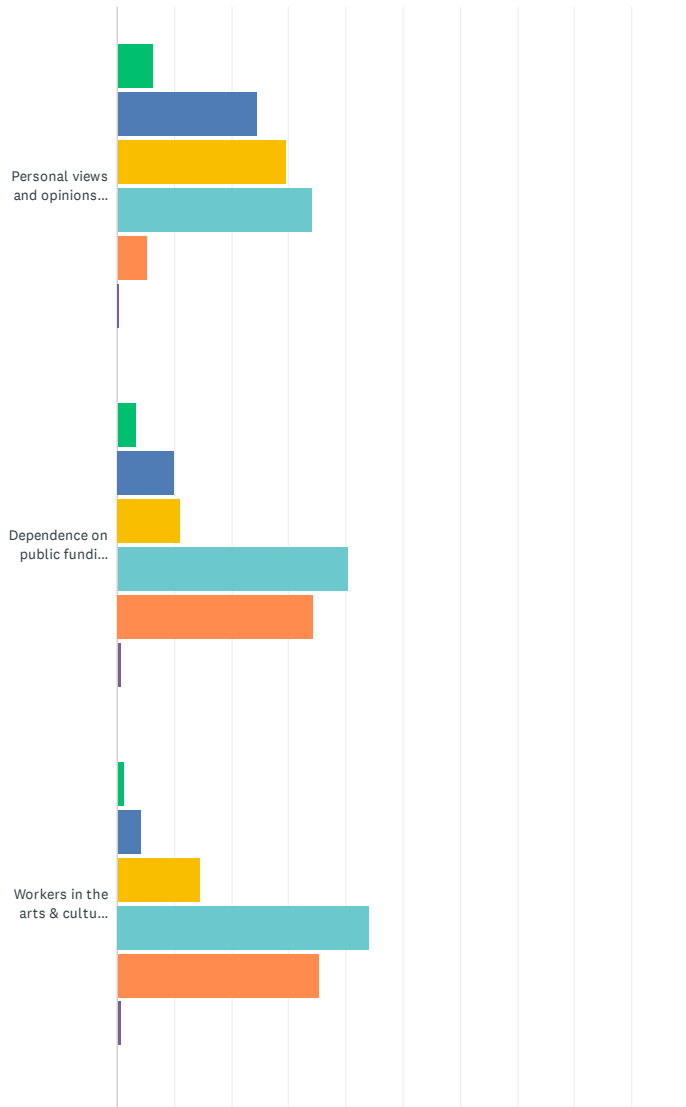
See Appendix B – Q7 open text comments (p107)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	16.07%	76
No	83.93%	397
TOTAL		473



### Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Answered: 436 Skipped: 77



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N/A	TOTAL
Personal views and opinions are met with respect by others working in the arts & cultural sector.	6.22% 27	24.42% 106	29.49% 128	34.10% 148	5.30% 23	0.46% 2	434
Dependence on public funding discourages open discussion about important issues.	3.45% 15	10.11% 44	11.03% 48	40.46% 176	34.25% 149	0.69% 3	435
Workers in the arts & cultural sector who share controversial opinions risk being professionally ostracised.	1.15% 5	4.15% 18	14.52% 63	44.24% 192	35.25% 153	0.69% 3	434
The potential for hostile social media reactions makes me hesitant to share my opinions online.	3.68% 16	8.74% 38	16.09% 70	36.55% 159	32.18% 140	2.76% 12	435
I would not publicly criticise the actions of funders for fear that it would jeopardise my future funding.	2.99% 13	12.18% 53	13.33% 58	37.01% 161	29.43% 128	5.06% 22	435
People working in the arts wouldn't dare own up to right-of-centre political opinions	2.54% 11	15.70% 68	26.10% 113	32.56% 141	20.55% 89	2.54% 11	433

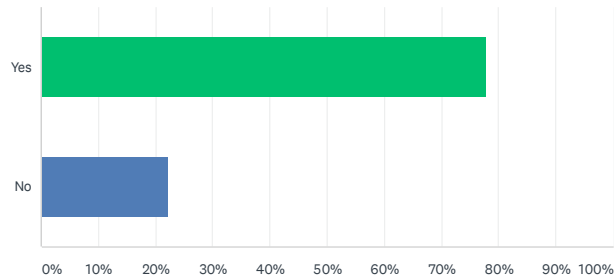
### Q9 Can you give examples of opinions that you think people working in the arts & cultural sector would be ill-advised to express publicly?

Answered: 231 Skipped: 282

See Appendix B – Q9 open text comments (p112)

### Q10 Are you involved in creating or presenting artistic work?

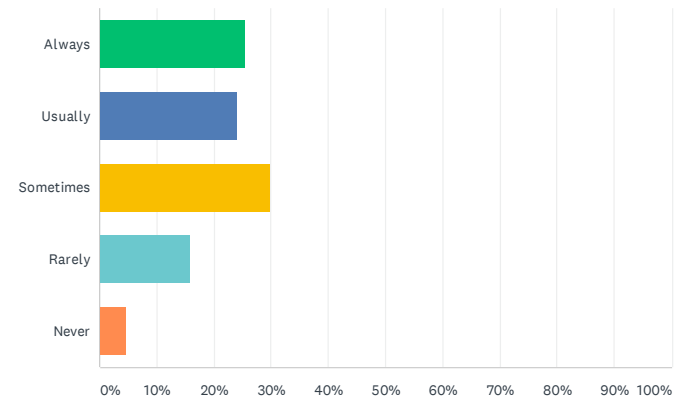
Answered: 434 Skipped: 79



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	77.88%	338
No	22.12%	96
TOTAL		434

### Q11 Do you weigh up the risk of controversy when planning your artistic or creative activities?

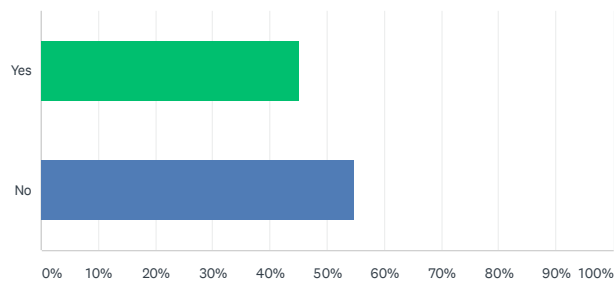
Answered: 341 Skipped: 172



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	25.51%	87
Usually	24.05%	82
Sometimes	29.91%	102
Rarely	15.84%	54
Never	4.69%	16
TOTAL		341

Q12 Have you ever felt pressurised, intimidated, ostracised, coerced, trolled, harassed or bullied, either in person or on digital media, in reaction to your artistic and creative activities?

Answered: 338 Skipped: 175



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.27%	153
No	54.73%	185
TOTAL		338

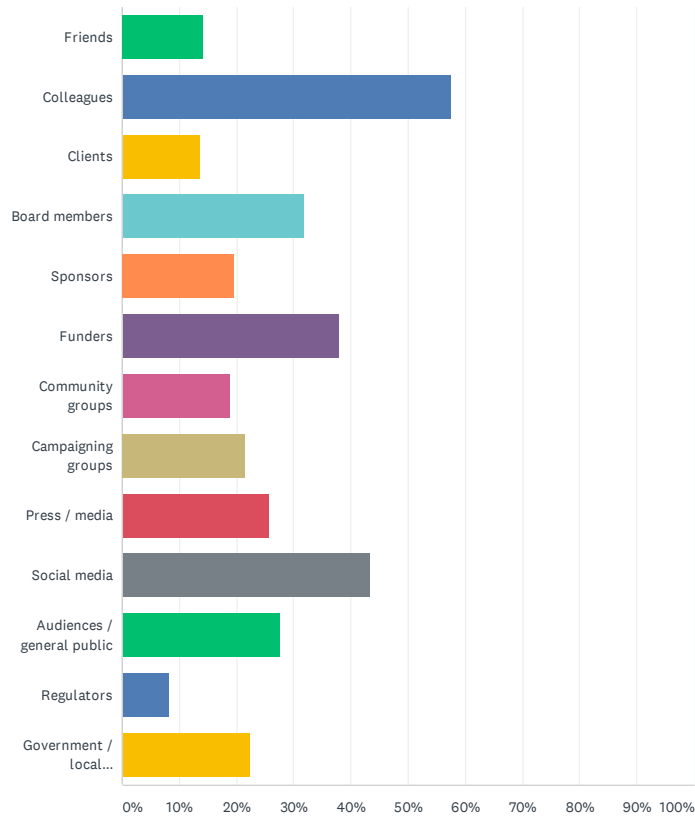
Q13 Please give more details of the circumstances under which you have felt under pressure.

Answered: 93 Skipped: 420

See Appendix B – Q13 open text comments (p133)

### Q14 From which of the following have you felt under pressure? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 148 Skipped: 365

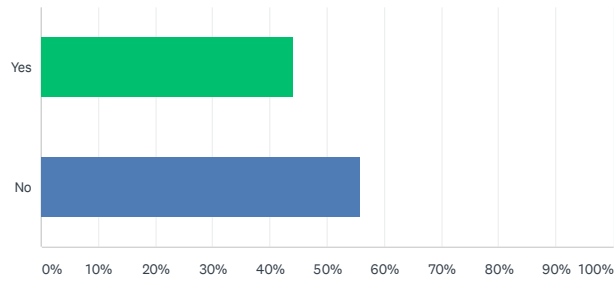


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Friends	14.19%	21
Colleagues	57.43%	85
Clients	13.51%	20
Board members	31.76%	47
Sponsors	19.59%	29
Funders	37.84%	56
Community groups	18.92%	28
Campaigning groups	21.62%	32
Press / media	25.68%	38
Social media	43.24%	64
Audiences / general public	27.70%	41
Regulators	8.11%	12
Government / local government	22.30%	33
Total Respondents: 148		



**Q15 Have you ever changed your artistic product, programming or plans due to this type of pressure?**

Answered: 147 Skipped: 366



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	44.22% 65
No	55.78% 82
TOTAL	147

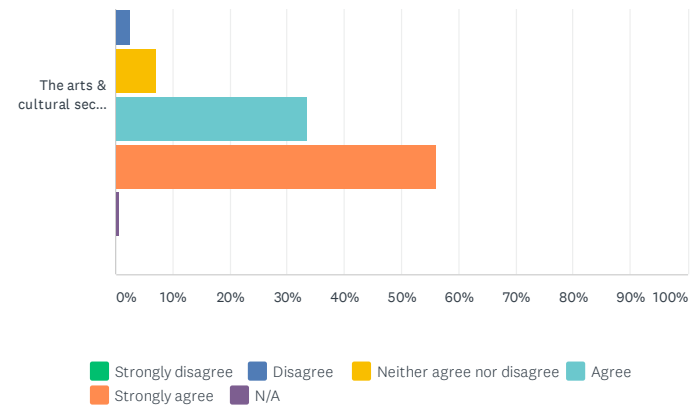
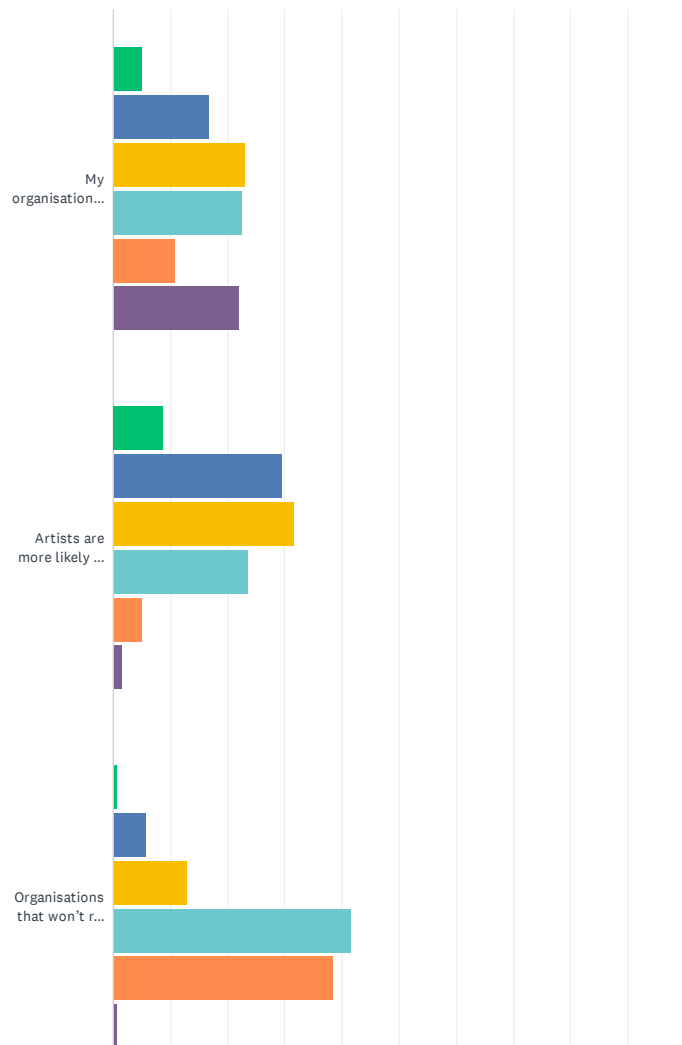
**Q16 Please explain why you decided to change your artistic product, programming or plans due to this pressure?**

Answered: 40 Skipped: 473

See Appendix B – Q16 open text comments (p142)

### Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Answered: 323 Skipped: 190



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N/A	TOTAL
My organisation's board of directors is unnecessarily cautious about creative work they perceive to be potentially controversial.	4.95% 16	16.72% 54	22.91% 74	22.60% 73	10.84% 35	21.98% 71	323
Artists are more likely to self-censor than arts organisations.	8.70% 28	29.50% 95	31.68% 102	23.60% 76	4.97% 16	1.55% 5	322
Organisations that won't risk controversy won't deliver the most exciting creative work.	0.62% 2	5.59% 18	13.04% 42	41.61% 134	38.51% 124	0.62% 2	322
The arts & cultural sector has a responsibility to use its unique talents to speak out about things that matter, regardless of the potential consequences.	0.31% 1	2.48% 8	7.12% 23	33.44% 108	56.04% 181	0.62% 2	323

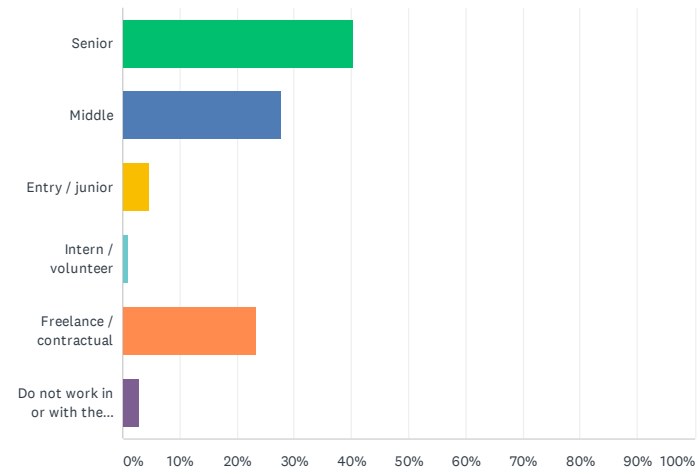
Q18 Do you have any other comments about censorship or self-censorship in the arts & cultural sector?

Answered: 133 Skipped: 380

See Appendix B – Q18 open text comments (p144)

Q19 At what level is your work with or in the arts sector

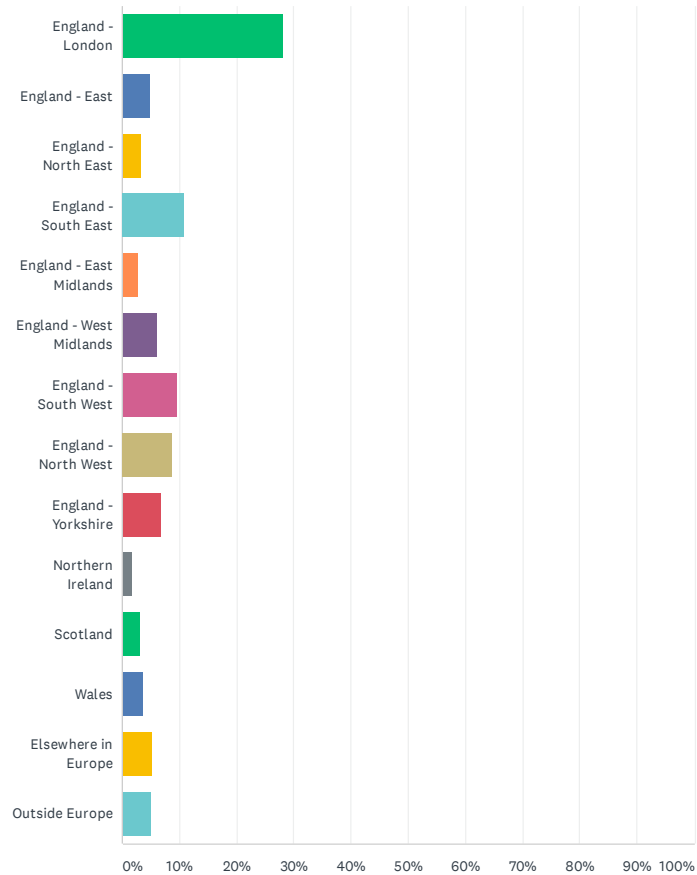
Answered: 414 Skipped: 99



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Senior	40.34%	167
Middle	27.78%	115
Entry / junior	4.59%	19
Intern / volunteer	0.97%	4
Freelance / contractual	23.43%	97
Do not work in or with the arts sector	2.90%	12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>414</b>

## Q20 Where are you based?

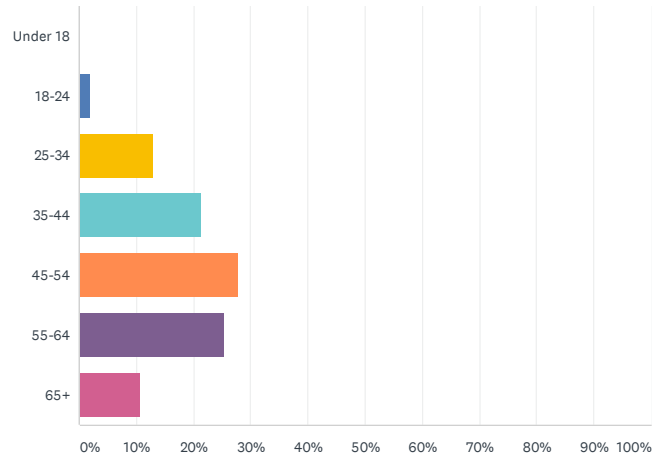
Answered: 413 Skipped: 100



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
England - London	28.09% 116
England - East	4.84% 20
England - North East	3.39% 14
England - South East	10.90% 45
England - East Midlands	2.66% 11
England - West Midlands	6.05% 25
England - South West	9.69% 40
England - North West	8.72% 36
England - Yorkshire	6.78% 28
Northern Ireland	1.69% 7
Scotland	3.15% 13
Wales	3.63% 15
Elsewhere in Europe	5.33% 22
Outside Europe	5.08% 21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>413</b>

### Q21 Which age group are you in?

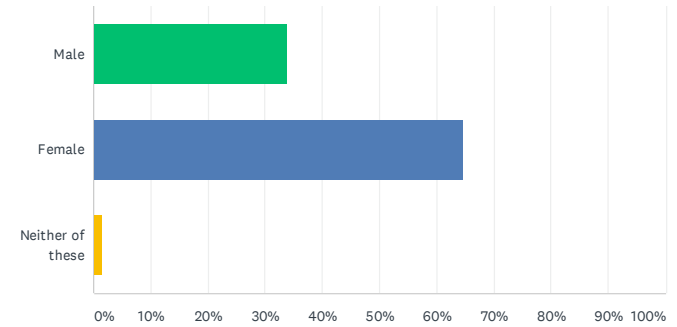
Answered: 411 Skipped: 102



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	COUNT
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	1.95%	8
25-34	12.90%	53
35-44	21.41%	88
45-54	27.74%	114
55-64	25.30%	104
65+	10.71%	44
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>411</b>

### Q22 Do you identify yourself as

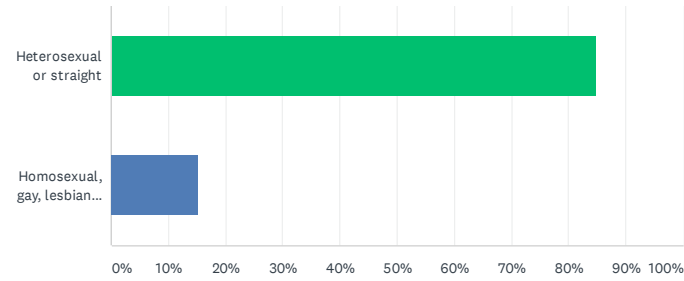
Answered: 408 Skipped: 105



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	COUNT
Male	33.82%	138
Female	64.71%	264
Neither of these	1.47%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>408</b>

### Q23 In terms of sexuality, do you consider yourself to be:

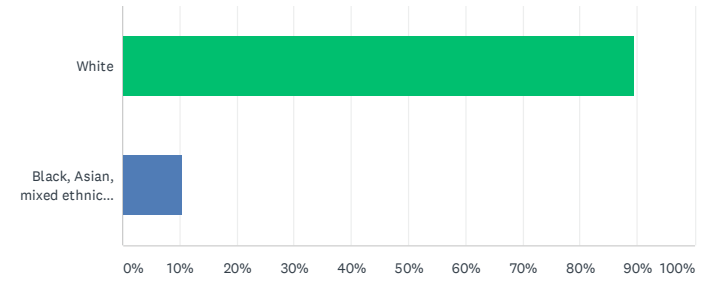
Answered: 388 Skipped: 125



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Heterosexual or straight	84.79% 329
Homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or other	15.21% 59
TOTAL	388

### Q24 Do you identify yourself as

Answered: 398 Skipped: 115

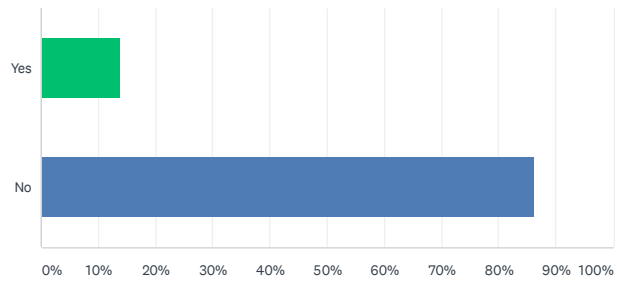


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
White	89.45% 356
Black, Asian, mixed ethnic background or other ethnicity	10.55% 42
TOTAL	398



### Q25 Do you consider yourself to be disabled or D/deaf?

Answered: 399 Skipped: 114



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	13.78%	55
No	86.22%	344
TOTAL		399

# Appendix B

## You spoke out...

### Q2 Do you have any comments about freedom of speech in the arts & cultural sector?

A sense that critical feedback is not always welcome. An advocacy focused approach to feedback/evaluation feeds this. Plus unspoken issues about what constitutes art/culture.

It depends who you are in the room; it's difficult to speak freely with senior industry peers at times, depending on the subject matter. It's easier to speak freely within groups of professionals with whom you're familiar, trust or feel that you have an affinity with.

There are multiple levels of "Freedom of Speech". With Freedom, comes responsibility. One must serve one's "conscience" of course, but one must recognize one's responsibilities to the institution's long-term life, and to the community's long-term stability. Within that there are multiple "codes of ethics" all unwritten, for the arts community, that establish different levels of "conscience". One has to ask, does the "speaking out" mean asking a question, or does it mean fundamentally disrupting or changing an organization? Or does it mean correcting or "tweaking" a policy or program that has errant or negative impacts that may not have been considered? Not all protests stop to consider the organization as a moving, operating entity, that may be responsive to change. Each organization speaks its own particular language, based upon its mission, location, constituencies, governance and even budget. The protestors have a responsibility to understand that language, if they wish to achieve a transformation. On the other hand, many organizations have a semi-fossilized leadership that may be blind-sided, or fully resistant to change. The challenge is to invent a shared language for change.

Personally my art is not that politically charged but I could



imagine that some radical leftist work might not get funded.

I feel that liberal and open-minded discussion about the Arts, particularly in the field of international collaboration and openness is, increasingly, being shut down or shouted over by loud-mouthed narrow-minded people who know nothing about the Arts. Whilst I support free speech and tolerance, we must be intolerant of intolerance.

You're often dismissed or not listened to by old cis white men.

I live in Scotland but was born in London so am very aware of being English, with the current debate around Brexit and Scottish independence. In general there is an assumption amongst fellow practitioner and artists that you must be pro independence, pro left politics and pro EU. I have usually voted centre left and, having been brought up in a multi cultural London, found a much more mono culture and outlook in Scotland. To express support for the Union is not an easy thing to do but my pro EU view, with some reservation about its democratic process, is more acceptable.

Working for a large organisation that commissions artists the fear of negative press and reputation risk especially when working with artists that work with protest or social issues has raised issues around censorship or what press we can achieve. Internal battling which stifles creativity.

If you are criticizing the work and policy of the Ministry of Culture might don't get the grant from them.

Much of the time I do feel free to say what I like. There are some issues, however, that I just keep quiet about as I worry that I might not be quite "woke" enough. As a result my answer to question 3 is no, because I have not said what I might think.



The UK press and media are by far too parochial.

The UK press is by far too parochial.

I really have to keep to the party line. I'm free to speak in all forms as long as I distance this from my employer but have to keep in mind the possible impact on my career. As a BAME artist, administrator and producer I already feel that speaking out plainly about issues including diversity and the clear lack of progress within the industry can still harm me. I feel this keenly with the institutional racism that is in organisations such as the Arts Council which exist but is clearly not faced.

Freedom of speech is very much curtailed when working for or funded by a local authority, for fear of upsetting one's masters.

I do think that the sector is populated by more left liberal leaning people, and we run the risk of alienating others with different opinions from us – audiences and workers.

I feel that the arts sector seems to want to "play the game", no doubt because it is fearful of losing funding. Often I have heard arts professionals (not artist but people who are managers/curators/facilitators) saying "we should make the best of (the situation)", putting on a positive face to what is obviously not a positive situation. It is as if we are all forcing a smile to go with all the smiling faces in the photos we take of participants in our activities to justify our existence. Austerity? Oh, let make the best of it...

Not really, also because there is a lot of hypocrisy and people don't like to be told the bad news or reality. Moreover, living in a post-structuralist discourse, then there is always a way to turn things around on their heads... so we can't never have a real conversation

anyway.

The danger of being cancelled by the woke sector is an increasing inhibition against free speech. I favour tough argument and am happy to face criticism and even rage, but being irrationally rejected because of race, age or gender is stultifying.

If a project is funded then mostly it's a case of shut your mouth.

Critical to have open and honest reporting as well as diversity of voices and outlets to reflect freedom of speech in the arts and cultural sector.

The work is so precarious you accept below the line working conditions just so you have a stable income in the sector.

It is a challenge as most "bosses" or cultural leaders don't like to hear negative comment, especially if you are from the non-white sector.

I do think Freedom of Speech is there but I question it is worth if no one is listening or acting on recommendations being made for over 20 years.

I do try and remain neutral so it doesn't affect employment prospects.

There are certain things where the arts sector feels stuck in time: I am politically very left of centre, as is the art scene. However, deviations of this political leaning are quickly shot down. I feel like we might be stuck in an echo chamber. At the same time alcohol is a big thing at arts events. Many still feel like there should be alcohol at openings. I think arts should be enough, but many disagree. Nudity/Sexuality: I find it very often "verklemmt" and conservative when it comes to these topics. The way around it is often highly stylised

visuals – almost advertisement worthy (not a good thing) – People speak freely about the need for diversity and more accessible arts, however very few middle sized to larger institutions follow through with these demands. Smaller organisations are quicker and better at following through. The bigger organisations attempts at this often feel tokenistic

When one is young and desperate to carve a career in the arts, one tends to worry about the approval of others. As you progress in your career, you gain confidence as an artiste and as a person. I am now over 60 and one of the wonderful things about growing old is that I don't care what anyone thinks of my values, my opinions or my politics. So have faith, it gets easier.

No, haven't had any issues.

Freedom of Speech should not include hate speech or derogatory comments.

Except for working in the UK, I run projects in different countries in the EU and it is more difficult to say your opinion in there, because then you may not be given a grant/support if you have applied for it.

Could do better.

Yes. I think that the arts & cultural sector is deeply mired in hierarchical, class-based prejudice. It is so ingrained into arts and culture that there is a double whammy – arts individuals and organisations pride themselves on their 'inclusivity', without acknowledging their own unconscious (& sometimes very conscious!) bias. They patronise working class or BAME artists and communities – whilst cutting down those that are from those backgrounds but have had the temerity to attempt to enter the ivory tower. I have witnessed and experienced the following in arts communities when people from working class backgrounds attempt to



contribute – freezing them out or cutting them short, laughing at people who's grasp of 'artspeak' doesn't match the rest of the room. There is also a huge gap between what is seen as popular and therefore low culture, or community art, and 'fine art'.

I think most funded organisations are so overworked with ticking boxes, fulfilling data and statistics that freedom to talk about the real issue in the sector get sidelined. Organisations will never openly challenge to funders who help them to survive in the very competitive arts industry that becomes more about value for money (bums on seats, numbers engaged etc.) rather than the quality of process and how true participating really happens. Artists are very careful to speak out that goes against the 'status quo' narrative of the funders. Again many artists are tasked with so many issues that tick boxes (working with big institutions, reaching bigger wider larger, reach beyond their capacity etc.) that it becomes oppressive. It means that people who understand 'the game of how to speak to applications' get the money but not necessarily provide the quality needed.

As a sector built on the principle of Freedom of Speech, I believe it is crucial that we retain it, fight for it, defend it.

I think that it depends on your role. As a fundraiser I need to be careful not to upset funders or corporate sponsors. Generally i think that freedom of speech in the arts is good.

Would like to showcase more Art embracing Diversity or the lack of understanding of it.

Most arts and cultural institutions whether state funded or private are often subject to operational pressures. It's the operational and financial needs that can curtail the feeling of being able to express concerns about the mental health of exhibition crew and those delivering workshops. It is these content/education/curator and interpretation roles that are key to the supposed value system of the institutions but more often than not are sidelined to make way for business/booking and operational and sales areas which are



placed above in the hierarchy a factor usually represented in rates of pay.

I feel sometimes only the loudest are heard.

We live in a digital era where people can be offended as if it is a dagger in the heart.

It's often a matter of choice and courage. I have spoken out about whatever I feel important to speak out about – this has led to a sense of isolation at times and my work sometimes being disregarded by “mainstream” critics and sometimes by gatekeepers such as festival and venue programmers as not “proper” art, but never by my local authority (be that Edinburgh, Fife, Brent or Camden) or by funders such as the Arts Council, Scottish Screen and Creative Scotland – who have encouraged freedom of speech and supported bold statements. I have found gatekeepers, often in the form of festival and venue promoters, confuse their own prejudices and limited notions of aesthetic value with those of their audiences. When raising the issue of discrimination around, for example, representations of disability on stage, it has been colleagues in the industry who have been most resistant and a considerable way behind those working in the voluntary sector. When I raised the issue of sectarianism in Scotland on stage and it provoked public death threats from the U.V.F., rather than rushing to my defence the theatre sector was silent – the only comments I received was it was my fault for raising the issue.

People often seem to use other people expressing their views as an excuse to attack others.

I think FoS is only for Senior Management in the arts sector. As a body we present that we are open minded and inclusive but history and the sheer lack of progression equality

says otherwise. In fact I suspect that if it wasn't for ACE hard wiring diversity into arts applications there wouldn't be the slow-paced progress we have had.

There is an agenda at the moment that seeks to push minority views before the content of the arts and cultural sector itself. We as a sector are being pushed into being the platform for these fringe opinions and lifestyles for a multitude of reasons and told we are old fashioned, racist, colonialist, homophobic, transphobic etc. if we are deemed to be not 'loud' enough. It is beyond obvious these issues need to be heard and resolved in the modern world – that is not the point I am contesting here – but if the agenda is forced over the sake of arts and culture then we are at risk of alienating those who love the arts but choose not to be political, and those who simply do not want to get involved in the debate. The love of the arts as a medium is suffering at the hands of those who are using it for political gains. The fear of offending is a plague to the notion of free speech and the creative arts. The arts should be bold. It should be brave. It should educate, inform, inspire and be loud. At the moment, we are shrinking violets, in fear of being branded a 'phobic' or some sort and it's crushing creativity. The right to free speech does not mean the right to be heard, but everyone has the right to be offended even if the offence is against those who are purporting to be offended. There is no such thing as 'free speech, but' yet this is where we have ended up. Art is becoming stale, exhibitions extorting minorities.

I have nothing to lose, I am a late career artist with sufficient money which allows me to do what I want, I do not have to please anyone nor do I want to impress buyers/collectors/media or peers. this allows me to speak freely. I realise my position is not typical but I will be interested to see if you survey looks at personal situations which may influence

responses. I do not waste time on the white noise of social media. I have experienced attempts to patronise and intimidate when working as an arts consultant and when expressing opposing views as a trustee of an arts charity but fortunately, for the reasons above, I have been able to withstand the onslaught.

In some places, usually with like-minded people it is possible to speak freely. However there are those who believe their voice is more important. They often sit in CEO positions in organisations that make speaking out difficult. If you speak out you create the risk of not getting any work or being labelled a trouble maker. There are those who like to make it difficult for anyone they cannot manipulate or control – their word is most important. The worst of these are those who lead NPO funded organisations. They are in a privileged position and very often abuse their position and status. It makes me not want to work within the arts sector with it's smiles, kisses and lovely words but in reality there is snideness and hierarchy and bullying. Thankfully not all are like this. There are those who you can talk freely with – people working with at the same level or within a contract together. Or those who are reflective and open to debate and discussion.

It depends on the context sometimes it's hard to give a challenging critique if an organisation or piece of artwork is already under threat of closure or funding withdrawal.

As a freelancer I'm always keen to guard my opinions from potential employers (both in person and online) – rather a lot of companies hire artists as mouth pieces for their own opinions rather than hiring a creative for the creative's ideas and opinions. It's quite common for art centres to become merely cafes with a programme of workshops attached as a sideline, and the artists are just there to add to the illusion (and give them something to post on social media) rather than being employed to spark conversation and ignite social change.



Discretion has been lost to the need to vent or radically expose. Many would need discretion in the views. As a director, I would hope for venting in private where something can be done rather than in public but I do see that if private expression receives no results, then public is necessary and support it.

The arts sector often muffles itself. It appoints safe options, it is largely a closed shop although it seeks a veneer to be otherwise.

I worked in the arts education sector before I retired and my experience is that this is where censorship and self censorship begins. As an example I'm old enough to remember life drawing being common and colleges, FE and HE, using male and female nude models. I met with difficulties employing models in FE situations in the last few years and had to display warnings for any student work that contained nudity or addressed any issues around the body or sexuality or explorations of gender. This is not a 'good' thing or a 'bad' thing, it's just a thing. Another example, a photography student began a project on an FE course at one of my colleges, his father was transitioning and he wanted to photograph that process to address a range of issues, particularly his relationship with masculinity as his father's change developed. He was encouraged at FE and progressed to HE at the same college where the project was stymied in the name of 'professionalism' in that its value was questioned as to its usefulness in his future career.

I am fortunate in that my role as an 'ideas leader' allows me to speak freely. However, after writing about the need for a new approach to arts funding in Arts Professional in 2015 my organisation mysteriously and immediately lost its ACE funding, and has never had a penny in grant-funding since. Naïve as I am, it only occurred to me quite recently that the timing of this sea change in our funding was perhaps not coincidental. More generally, and even whilst running a successful NPO, I found that suggestions for innovative change in the arts sector always fell on deaf ears. Or, at least, the ideas occasionally reappeared in





a similar form being championed by other, more 'approved' voices. In short, I do feel that there is an effective form of censorship in the arts sector, and that this is damaging.

I personally gave myself permission to speak out as loud as I can, but I am encountering severe oppression because of that. Anyway, I do not hesitate to proceed with my engagement.

I think it is hard to express concerns about the culture of low pay and long hours in the arts management sector. Whilst trying to make budgets balance which funders, local authorities and other stakeholders who are trying to reduce or looking for VFM at all times, we are left in the situation where we are treating our arts professionals, especially in first jobs/industry entrance roles in a way that we would never treat our beneficiaries or participants. The danger is that it is the staff at all levels of an arts/cultural organisation who become the hidden subsidy of its success. Where we try to have appropriate levels of pay, we are left with smaller teams/capacity than other peers/competitors who are paying inappropriately low wages. And for those who remain in the sector, I am seeing burnout from prolonged periods of stretched capacity, funding uncertainty, long hours, all putting pressure on personal wellbeing and relationships. We should not have to be childless and partner-less to have time to lead a cultural organisation. This is the only place I have felt I could say this. Within funding and strategic conversations with stakeholders, we have to be seen to be thriving and positive about our organisation's future. Low pay and long hours could also be the hidden agenda around lack of BAME representation in the cultural sector. If you are bright, articulate, have energy and are BAME there is both social and practical pressure to look at careers in industries that

remunerate well and have security and clear progression pathways...which leaves arts/culture as a vocation – which is fine – but then open to exploitation of goodwill and unreasonable expectations of personal time and energy which is damaging in the long-term.

Very varying degrees of confidence across sectors as people don't want to appear to be controversial.

What freedom of speech? The tools of silence, socio-political protocol and denial have effectively poisoned any kind of free speech. Well done you middle classes, you've successfully transferred your poisonous familial behaviours into a place where freedom of speech was, once, a cornerstone.

I don't speak out to anyone other than my friends and family how hard it is to get a job in the arts when I feel like I'm treated like a number. I'm ready to give up on a career in museums due to the fact I feel my skills are so undervalued. I have a lot of experience and skills required but I don't think I'll get the job in an industry that wants you to do a lot of work for free. I also feel like you have to step on others to fight for those competitive decisions. I'd be worried I'd never get a job if I spoke out.

Being a BAME female in the sector I feel my voice / opinions are often ignored or shut down usually by men.

there is a sense of restriction and limitation that if one does not follow the current 'party' line it is best not to speak up ie that excellence in itself should not be held up as a criteria there is a spirit of tokenism ie everyone now is looking out for or supposed to be – making

big claims for seeking BAME artists / participants or working class people bit daft as most people are middle class and the spectrum has widened to encompass more people.

Cancel culture, no-platforming and censorship has got to end.

I believe my reticence to speak within my sector spills over from my reluctance to speak about wider issues. As a 50 year old white, middle-class woman, who has a life-long career in the health & arts sectors, I find my opinions are often invalidated purely because I am a '50 year old white, middle-class woman', others pre-supposing that my life has been one without prejudice and therefore what could I possibly know about anything. Freedom of speech is an issue for all, especially as we live in a time where disagreeing with the status quo leads to abuse, insult and defamation of character as a means to control the individual who chooses to step out of line.

There appears to be a very heavy handed reaction to any questions raised about sexual and ethnic balance in the media, to the extent that I do censor myself. This is particularly the case concerning Israeli arts and culture, and any representation suggesting that the country has tremendous virtues. There appear to be an inordinate number of politically correct productions in theatre these days where our levels of disbelief are sorely tested, but where public comment brings a torrential amount of vitriol and scorn.

Differences between working as a freelancer and working within an organisation: Too nervous as a freelancer to call out poor behaviour as worried about repercussions Unable to defend organisation properly as cannot talk about lots of behind the scenes activity.



Running an arts organisation is a balancing act. Trying to provide the best for your users or audiences can often conflict with the views and policies of funders, especially local authorities and Arts

Council. Arts Council are especially out of touch with smaller grassroots arts organizations, partly because of the drastic cuts imposed on them and partly because they are mostly privately educated. ACE staff do not like to be challenged by people who are not like them. I also suspect they favour organisations led by similarly educated people with similar attitudes of entitlement and over-confidence.... They speak the same language. I could not have suggested such a thing before I retired. As a former CEO of a rural arts organisation, it was also hard to speak out against the funding cuts enthusiastically implemented by some Tory councils for fear of incurring further cuts.

I'm in Wales but work across the whole of the UK. Control, especially passive control by funders is becoming greater rather than lesser. They've adopted a "leadership" model of funding rather than a "support" model. What that means for us is that we are constantly being judged, usually by staffers who have neither the experience nor the backup to be able to speak authoritatively on issues like disadvantage, ethnicity, diversity, etc. As these semi-public bodies are appointed rather than elected, they have no mandate to speak on our behalf. So everything they pay attention to becomes something that they know "better" than us – a top down way of thinking that imposes rather than a representative bottom up model that responds to the experience of the sector. IT varies across the UK with Creative Scotland being by far the most supportive of the Arts Councils. It is rarely explicit (\*you cannot say that and you must say this)". It is never uniform and of course it is never admitted. When looking at diversity, for example, we're never offered data against which to measure our activity and a clear framework within which to act, nor are we allowed to ask for it. We are expected to understand. We are told that this is our Equalities Plan for us and it is up to us how we develop it, until we are told that it is the wrong kind of plan. What is worse is that it kills conversations about culture, art, participation, the various degrees of excellence which we should recognise. We become trapped in a Groundhog Day cycle of virtue signalling which in turn becomes measured as actual



development.

At work, as an arts professional, I am forced to watch my language and tone when delivering artistic criticism.

Since I have run my own company, which is strongly values based, I have started being open about my opinions. It has of course cost me a lot of work and referrals and my professional progress has slowed, which feels directly related – even when the things I am expressing are done diplomatically and referring to serious professional mistreatment, bullying, intimidation and malpractice, by individuals and organisations, who by the nature of the industry set up, artists are being actively encouraged to follow in the same path.

Cancel-culture is only growing in public life. One alarming example is that women who are in any way gender-critical are often branded 'Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists' (or 'TERF's) and face losing their jobs and/or being 'no-platformed'. Public bodies including the Arts seem to be walking on egg-shells with issues such as the one just mentioned, either through an anxiety about offending genuine transgender people or out of fear that they will be branded 'transphobic' in the same unquestioning knee-jerk fashion.

I may speak out but I am not convinced that it falls on ears that are listening.

I have been inhibited by sometimes viscous reactions to even mild comments/opinions

As a producer, I have to consider the impact on the artists that I represent when considering how I contribute to sector dialogue. I tend to avoid participation in potentially contentious issues in public forums for this reason.

Different artistic communities champion particular viewpoints. There is little room for nuance and in some areas no room at all for dissenting views. People with patronage or wealthy backgrounds will have a degree of freedom of speech as their only concern will be popularity and social status. That said these people seem obsessed with those things so it is a big influence. A poor artist, and I speak from first hand experience, may as well be in a prison. If you speak your mind you run the risk of being frozen out of opportunity. If you don't echo or mirror the views and styles of those who hold the purse strings you also get excluded. The Arts Council to a degree does a good job in trying to ensure fair opportunity but support or opportunity does not take into account the reality of someone from a disadvantaged background. We may get a grant but beyond that grant we have nothing. We are expected to build from nothing in an environment that does not want us. We have to be careful with our words. In my area my organisation has larger audiences and that others. We are committed to high quality work that collaborates across art forms and cultures celebrating diversity and equality. We have bigger audiences that other organisations and ultimately represent a different way to do things. The press don't review us, the BBC doesn't present us, we get a fraction of the funding of other groups, we get few opportunities to perform beyond that which we create. Can we complain about this? No we can't. Why? Because they will call us bitter hot heads, diminish our work and make things even harder for us. I was told personally that I would never work again after refusing an offer. We get turned down all the time but the moment we refuse a command we are out. Both the left and right are guilty of this. There is no one side that is worse.

We don't have any, and the noose has been tightened since about 2012, when all the

cuts came in. I have discussed this with other freelance colleagues: we all agree that procurement practice, in particular, is unfair and weighted against independents, people with disabilities and people with caring responsibilities, for example, only giving 14 days (not working days) to prepare large bids and is extremely dependent upon previous experience and is entirely biased to West European bureaucratic biases. However, when I suggest we bring this up, everyone says it will give us a black mark. I also question any process that allocates the same character count for a contract worth £750,000 or £25,000 as sufficient to ensure quality and due diligence (but they are happy to set the most outrageous financial conditions from suppliers, which are way beyond the average income of a solo independent, and do not take any account of collaborative working where freelancers team up). I have asked ACE, off my own back, if they have ever done an equality impact assessment on their procurement process and was fobbed off. It would be interesting to track who has won contracts from ACE over the past 3 years, for example, to see how diverse that is, and whether it's an open, competitive process or just geared up to ensure the usual suppliers get the work, because ACE is comfortable with the people. I noticed about 6 years ago that any questioning (not even challenging) of the status quo marks one out as a trouble-maker and then the contracts will dry up, even if you're the best/most local/experienced person for the job. I have noticed that when ROH Bridge contracts come up, my LinkedIn profile gets checked by the Head, but she won't contact me (and a couple of the other managers) because I challenged a piss-poor contract that required freelancers to work to sub-standard practices (which would only damage our reputation). As a result, I have completely dropped out of the scene or loop. There are all sorts of examples of petty corruption and cronyism at a local, regional and national level. ACE has allowed monopolies to thrive, which cuts out new and emerging talent, ideas and people and simply doesn't reflect the



diversity of our society.

I think the arts and cultural sector can be a good platform for bringing important issues to public attention and therefore I think they should be allowed freedom of speech.

It's particularly difficult to have open artistic conversations if you know the artist well and they project a sense of entitlement or their own importance and aren't able to self critique; this limits the artform. Competition for funds can stifle discourse. I have felt indirect pressure to 'play the game' There's still white male dominance despite so many marvellous women in the sector.

The tail, must not be allowed to wag the dog. i.e. sponsors must have absolutely no say in what they are funding. TRUST is the word.

I feel that we all have to be very aware of what we say, do and promote. This does limit the options available to us all. We treat everyone the same and sometimes it is difficult to know what to do without offending certain groups or individuals.

It would be good to have more diverse forums where all voices can be heard

Arts and culture are innately linked to people and identity, which means that sensitive topics emerge regularly and it is easy to offend or upset through words or actions. This complexity creates beauty and diversity, but can also lead to difference and conflict. It is a tricky balancing act to ensure freedom of speech and free thinking whilst also having a critical and analytical eye on what things mean to us personally and professionally.

Money and need to be seen dictates what you say.

As a curator of Passion for Freedom Festival in London we have experienced pressure and intimidation through the gallery management and the Police in 2015. The case is documented by the Index on Censorship. The work could not have been shown as the



Police said it is “potentially inflammatory” and if we chose to exhibit it we would have to pay £6K per day for Police protection. As the exhibition was 7 months after myself and the festival’s director survived the terror attack in Copenhagen we were shaken up by the fact that instead of being protected we are forced into this position. Since then we were wondering how the competition shortlisted artworks will be received and whether this time ourselves and the artists would be accused of “hate speech” since the issues around freedom always involved difficult and complex issues. The “hate speech” law could be weaponized to shut down the debate.

Plurality of political views not welcome or appreciated in the sector. Arts Council and other public sector bodies control majority of funding and do not like to be challenged eg artwashing!

There isn’t any if you want to get ahead – the sector is infested with a close-minded group-think.

He problem is that there is A VIEW which is propagated from the Government/Arts Council (I do not see the Arts Council as Independent) which holds sway and it is very difficult to advance a different opinion or approach.

Well you can get pigeon holed, as the person who does says whatever it is? This could be an advantage if people are liking what you are saying, but also a disadvantage if they don’t? Think you are more likely to say what you think people want to hear, if you want to be popular and sell art. To be controversial you have to stick your head out above the parapet, and in doing so may actually shoot yourself in your own foot.

Opinions that others disagree with can lead to them – especially if they have power and influence – in blocking opportunities for the people you work with. There is an increasingly unhealthy approach, maybe made worse by social media, that is not about debating difference but about being negative and critical. Our politicians lead the way with back biting and scoring against each other rather than productive debate that incorporates difference.

The fact that most venues are restricted in booking overtly political events by either their charitable status or their licence. if the demand of an audience is there then are freedom of assembly rights being denied?

It is definitely a challenge to speak out against institutions regarding bad practice and institutional racism, homophobia, transphobia and other issues when you are dependent on them for survival. there needs to be a radical shift in the way arts and artists are funded with the financial balance shifting to artists rather than venues and administrative arts workers.

It’s always in multiple dangers. Politically, economically, religiously, socially...

If you have been forced to sign an NDA then you have no freedom.

I worked for various organisations including ACE for 15 years, then freelance the last decade. I’m considerably more free to say what I want now, but it comes at a price, quite literally. Pressure isn’t overt, but there’s a double bind. On the one hand, there’s a long-standing and long-discredited argument for aesthetic autonomy that insists the arts are apart from the social and political. That operates largely through peer pressure, but



also affects recruitment practices, Board appointments, and fundraising strategies. ACE implicitly and sometimes explicitly oversees this in the name of 'impartiality'. I'm not sure it's getting 'worse', but it has become entrenched – a form of denial – as our politics more broadly has shown greater signs of distress. (Fwiw, I can think of at least one NPO that was cut after taking a more explicitly political position, when its artistic output and financial management were exemplary.)

Part of my work includes being in schools. I feel I have to be careful about my opinions on the provision of the arts, as well as the importance of providing the education of arts and culture for all; I don't want to be seen to critiquing those that hire me. When in fact I understand that my opinions really reflect the people at the top as well as a historic, evolutionary opinion and understanding of its importance. I, alight with others should be able to speak freely.

I feel free to speak publicly because I'm freelance. I'm fairly sure my views lead me to not be considered for some work.

It's hard to make comments about procedures and requirements of funders for fear of loss of potential income in the future. Even making comments about the often onerous administration, evaluation and reporting required can be a 'black mark' against you.

It is not something I have ever felt hindered by, either personally or in my role within my organisation.



Being honest and open can have a detrimental effect on funding and job opportunities in some sectors.

Being honest and open can have an extremely negative affect on many funding or job prospects.

Freedom of speech is not prescriptive. It must allow for opinions

outside the perceived consensus (eg: comments that might be considered racist or sexist) as well as more nuanced debate.

The sector is still led by large white, middle-class establishment figures, so there is always a risk that speaking out – be it in the name of class, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability – labels you as a troublemaker.

I work mainly to commission and the secret is to say what you feel needs to be said in a way that Funding Bodies overlook. I always set up areas of potential compromise e.g. write/say something which you know might upset people knowing that you will not say or write it. Funding Bodies etc. then feel involved and you still say/write what you want. Always give something they can comment upon, become involved in etc. but make sure it's something that will compromise the integrity of your work. Swear words a brilliant for this.

I think for many years there has been an element of Stalinism creeping in in particular when dealing with the funding sector. . . people are concerned if they say something their funding might be penalised. A little concerned that ACE is politically driven and they don't like some subjects being discussed. . . this also might affect your funding application....

That my job will be in jeopardy if I speak out as a working class member of staff struggling to earn fair pay. I haven't had a pay rise in two years and yet those in management have.

There is a "fashion cycle" with issues that the funders recognise which can exclude certain members of the arts community. Class is an avoided issue.

I have experienced pressure and censorship in regional public museums and galleries over exhibition and display content as well as acquisitions. There is a 'fear' of 'bad' press and adverse publicity which makes for conservative approaches.

We are not allowed to publicly discuss workplace bullying in the arts, unless it involved





sexual harassment / abuse. Day-to-day non-sexual bullying is still not to be discussed, and even more so if it came from a female boss (though personally, most of what I experience is from insecure and arrogant young men.) If workplace bullying is raised publicly, it leads to additional bullying from the friends and supporters of the original bully, increasing the impact. No one is prepared to have a grown-up conversation about this!

The TERF wars keep me quiet as an older, white, middle class feminist born in the 1950's, trained in biology and genetics. Just too hot for me to even ask questions of my fellow artists, without accusations flying. When dissing new work I was making about infertility recite my mentor advised me to not even come close to issues about being born with or without a womb. Not all threats to freedom of speech come from outside the arts and culture sector.

Just because I should have the freedom to say what i like, doesn't mean that I have the automatic right to be given a public platform to air my views – especially if that platform is paid for by public money, and especially if they contravene the publicly stated views of the organisation which that platform belongs to.

The weaponisation of bigotry by populist politicians is making things increasingly difficult.

Boring and off trend but as a middle aged, white, male artist I feel there is currently little space for my opinion or feelings, specifically in relation to opportunity and employment. When struggling to find work and seeing there are plenty of initiatives to redress ethnic, gendered and disabled under representation, I feel I am paying for previous generations mistakes and dominance of the arts sector. I understand why it's necessary but it doesn't

make it any easier when you're under-employed.

I have worked in the arts, successfully, for 30 years.

The climate in the arts & culture sector in Northern Ireland is increasing turbulent. With overall cuts to the sector of more than 40% in the past ten years, the toll is now being paid by even the largest and 'best-heeled' organisations in the province. No one is safe. And unfortunately the sharp end of this is squeezing the possibilities and ambitions for the smallest & youngest organisations, and individual artists. Speaking frankly about our experiences feels more necessary but less welcome – there just isn't room. We try to move beyond the attitude of scarcity – pushing boundaries and making new work no matter what – but that lurking mentality is becoming a basic reality. The most challenging, provocative, sophisticated work demands time and resources that non-core-funded organisations have trouble mustering. There is absolutely brave and ground-breaking work happening, and artists are becoming increasingly vocal about politics (beyond the sectarian divide) – but the censorship happening here is more in resource terms, being tied to shoestring production budgets and low-to-no pay. Tough to maintain.

There are areas that people dare not to tread. It strikes me as being necessary that artists are bolder in the way they challenge the current paradigm of the 'new normal'.

The new phrase 'micro aggressions' is a sign of the forensic intolerance pervading public life rather than the language of inclusion and understanding and just being interested in fellow human beings.

I think the fact that the leader of Middlesbrough Town Hall has resigned because Chubby

Brown is performing there is a form of censorship. Personally, I find the man vulgar and wouldn't watch him but those that enjoy his form of humour have a right to see it. The Germans banned certain music and books in the Second World War and we condemned them. Now it appears that it's okay for the Arts to decide what the rest of us can and can't see by refusing to take money from oil companies and deciding who should perform. To my eyes they're no better than those that censored people in the Second World War and should be ashamed of themselves.

I am aware that, as I work in the industry as well as being an artist myself, I need to be careful about what I say. I feel that class and privilege play a massive part in the way that things are selected, jobs are allocated and that the personal choices of a narrow group of people has the most influence. I think that unconscious bias is a big factor and it's hard for some people to become more aware of other people's experiences, and therefore engage with their perspectives, because of this! One of my senior colleagues has led an enormously privileged life, but is unable to accept that the people they socialise with regularly are on a completely different level, in terms of class, contacts and wealth, to the majority of people in the UK.

It's been a judgemental sector for me and unless you're a certain personality, you'll be eaten alive. I've chosen not to participate in order to protect my mental health.

It's very difficult to speak freely and pass comment when you are working to secure funding from the organisations and system you would like to criticise.

It is necessary to toes the lone to be in the running for funding.

As in any sector, freedom of speech does not mean hate speech is acceptable.

Contracts of employment specifically prohibit this.



Local authorities often try to dabble in arts programming. Officers, not in direct control of arts organisations, often feel they have a role in delivering cultural agendas and impose their views on the arts organisations within the council remit. Throughout a long career I have seen arts organisations having to conform to decisions on booking artists that local authorities wish to impose. These have ranged from taking over the arts building for council meetings or purposes without any or very little notice, expecting arts managers to cancel any other activities being held at the time, to councillors demanding that local performance groups are allowed to stage shows in theatres, no matter the appalling level of ability and the warnings of arts officers that such performances would damage respect for the venue. Quality control is an area that goes out of the window in their eyes of councillors and other council officers if they hold a pet project or group close to their heart. Everyone is an expert in how to run a venue, a company or how to market performances to the local area.

There's a real issue around airing views that may be deemed controversial, ie critical of the hand that feeds the arts, and but also of current practices. It is full of sensibilities, of people talking about doing things but not actually doing it, of outdated practices, of "but that's what we've always done", afraid of change and challenging power structures. And there's a lot of mediocre stuff around but you can't say so because there's only ever good or bad, never critical views – everything is always someone's baby rather than a professional project and the move for accountability within professional contexts – too long the sector has been too cosy, more a lifestyle than a profession and that breeds a certain attitude to not rock the boat.

Hahahaha! the irony. Always when there are cuts, education and the arts is where i work and where I have seen outrageous cuts. Homogenised kids is what the masters, todays government, wants. shockingly so. Kids no longer are allowed to express and speak freely



about their feelings, needs and where their strengths are if they are artistic and not academic. Its an education these days but not a classical one unless you are rich then yes you can still have an artistic classical education The ARTS!!! Student figures have plunged in the arts.... shockingly so, schools no longer care about the arts, artistic children and these used to be good schools, teachers establishments too many people kept quiet and did not fight the changes, Money in education, education as a business, an academy a trust!!! Pah! To little too late we get what we deserve. sadly as no one said anything to stop this mess , no one stood up , if you did and I did you got and still get shot down. 'tis the sign of the times' my arse... they came for the gypsies, gays, immigrants then no one was left. Education is the beginnings and we have been made to strangle the arts in education, why do you think there is more self harming and mental health in our young....it's not just social media , its education where only academic subjects have taken priority where if a child cannot pass English, Maths and Science they are deemed useless and doomed. Sad sad times, homogenised kids, society and the Arts and the Cultural sectors are now feeling it too? Fight ! be loud, very loud! Freedom of speech everywhere, especially where its being made to be quiet. Speak Up I cant hear you!

I feel the sector can be 'judgey' and have set expectations or ideas about how artists express themselves – ironic for a sector embedded within self expression and innovative practice.

I have been told to curb my social media posting as it is not policy to express any political opinion. This is not the first organisation where this has happened. I have a personal twitter account but use it for both professional and personal stuff – the line has been

crossed and I have to watch what I say.

It's not free. But none of it ever really is. I don't feel I can always say what I feel, believe, have seen, have heard, with confidence that saying it alone can or will manifest any change. Eg gendered pay? The MU sets rates. Charities pay on market tested bands. Consider your gendered benefits (if employed at all) . . . Pfft, but it happens, I KNOW my male counterparts are paid more than me, they tell me their salary – or current expectations – I don't take the bait, I just store it until I can eventually call on it.

I work alongside learning disabled artists, some of the most marginalised artists working in the arts & cultural sector. We are constantly told that learning disabled artists are represented amongst disability specific funding programmes, festivals, commissions etc, but this is not the case. When we challenge this – and provide specific examples – we are shut down and met with defensive responses, rather than constructive conversation.

I think there are real discussions to have around institutional messages – the need for institutions to have a 'brand' which can circumscribe how they speak about themselves and the subjects that they deal with. 'Difficult' narratives – ones which may paint the institution, or its angle on a subject, in a bad light – are often avoided, sometimes under the prescriptions of audience evaluation and the subsequent need for a 'clarity of voice'. This only taps into a wider concern around funders of institutions/prizes/scholarships/awards, and how they may affect (even tacitly) the content and perspective of the work that they fund.

There is no freedom of speech anywhere these days.

Fear of informal 'blacklisting' is rife, leading people to stay silent about abuses and bullying. Nobody wants to be 'that person'. There is pressure to always have the correct opinion as per the culture of your organisation/role.

I think I often hold back on how open I am about my personal opinions publicly for consideration of how it might affect future job opportunities or potential responses/repercussions.

Endlessly aware of the seemingly 'new' political correctness and requirement to be aware of many 'issues' that people have, that any comment is made knowing that, for all the sensitivity and diplomacy, one is treading on eggshells. Unintentionally, for all the trying, it seems that one is bound to offend or upset someone.

Because of other trustees, because of funders, because of our audience, it is difficult to be able to speak freely as my opinions may differ. I don't want to jeopardise any grants or ticket sales so keep quiet much of the time.

It's not easy being an Arts Manager in a local authority setting. Your role is to protect the arts but quite often you are stuck between a rock and a hard place when it come to advocating for culture and dealing with local political pressures, which quite often are not around funding issues or lack of finance but around a political direction and the will of a local authority directorate or portfolio holder councillors.



Having worked within the Executive teams of a couple of NPOs and having worked as the chair of a third – I do feel that I monitor what I say to ACE officers and at public/industry meetings. It is not particularly sinister, but I have always been aware that I need to keep on the right side of the hand that feeds me. Possibly what is a little more delicate is the relationship the I have had to manage

with local politicians and officers when it comes to considering funding from the council. My experience is that within this sector, the people you are working with are a little bit more sensitive!

As a freelancer, it's a difficult balance between freedom of speech and losing a job or client, you have to be a cheer leader of all sorts of companies and values that don't necessarily fit your own values. Such as; (as a disabled artist) do I speak out about disabled inclusivity or access (or lack of), I can't always be a teacher in this, plus I sometimes put myself in a position of scrutiny by speaking out. I am similarly unnerved when challenging on decent rates of pay, or respect (and consulting of) freelance expertise.

As an organisation in receipt of public funding I need to make sure that our media responses etc are measured and to some extent careful.

Whilst I am committed to access and inclusion at a fundamental level, I feel that the new practice of calling out injustice is often applied without insight and isn't really helping.

Being in a sector where good, permanent jobs are few and far between, you do have to think twice about taking a stance on some topics.

A lot of my arts clients get council funding, so I have felt I've had to limit my critical views of the council (of which we have many) in order to not cause any problems for my client and potentially lose there work.

It feels increasingly under threat – a decade of austerity putting intense pressure on artists and arts workers to maintain good relations with 'the hand that feeds them' coupled with growth of social media leading to increasingly divisive and cruel public realm.

I think that the arts sector in general has a strong 'liberal elite', left-wing, metropolitan bias, which means that if you do not have certain views you may not feel able to discuss them freely.



I work within a Local Authority, there are always some pressures to ensure that you stay within the official line – even when you are speaking outside of a work context. These pressures have more recently centred upon comments relating to the impact of cuts to arts and cultural budgets. Local authority arts people are expected to be experts but to behave like civil servants. Not always an easy balance.

I am a white, middle aged, male and what might be broadly called pretty ordinary middle of the road bloke. I believe passionately in equality and freedom of speech but increasingly I find that the current sector mood music just neatly drops me in to a stereotyped niche of those to be hated and vilified. It seems sad in that in its pursuit of diversity and equality the sector has in reality chosen another group to persecute.

I feel there's sometimes a pressure to be seen as having been born with the "correct" views, rather than growing, evolving and sometimes explicitly re-educated. As an older person it is natural I might hold views which younger people find difficult or challenging (and vice-versa) but I can't ask honest questions (about terminology etc.) unless I'm in a very safe environment.

I work for a large funding institution and there is a strong steer that as we represent the organisation we are only to share corporately agreed opinions. This is exceptionally challenging if the institution is refusing to formulate any position, despite demonstrable desire from the sector to enter into dialogue with us. I don't feel I can trust my employer to have my back if I express a personal opinion. As the organisation is subject to Freedom of Information requests, there has been a tendency to keep written records to a minimum. This has a negative impact on transparency, but perhaps does encourage

in-house openness. Having said that, I think Chatham House Rule meetings can be an unhelpful wielding of power, and provide a forum for unprofessional conduct that can't be challenged if the most powerful representative in the room has laboured the point of trust. Things can be said that might be inappropriate or offensive but there is no route to hold the speaker to account.

I often feel pressured to self censor for fear of being 'cancelled' or bullied for not conforming to the orthodoxy. I am a biological female who has experienced misogynist bullying from trans colleagues on more than one occasion. In both cases, I was aggressively bullied and physically intimidated by trans women in a way that I would normally associate with misogynist male behaviour. However, because these people were trans women, it was difficult for me to get support for combating the behaviour that called it out as what it was – misogyny because of the fear of reprisal from trans activists. Gender is not just a physical thing but is constructed from the way we have been socialised from childhood. I think there needs to be a genuine and positive discussion about how to manage the needs of both trans and biological female people in female only and shared spaces.

In every institution there is a hierarchy, that is sadly a fact of life and is ever present throughout our daily lives. However as an artist that daily faces many uphill struggles I passionately believe that the arts deal with ethics and values like no other industry can or will.

I think it's extremely hard to say anything without the worry that it might reflect badly on an organisation – and that it might also be taken against that organisation by funders



I worked in the voluntary sector over many years and in campaigning organisations. The underlying principle was that the work undertaken was done 'without fear or favour' and I feel that is generally lacking in the arts & cultural sector.

I would really like to point out the lack of exhibition opportunities for serious emerging artists in my local area. However as the vast majority of galleries are run by one charitable trust, I feel that I would be making myself stand out as a trouble maker. I have the same issue with ACE, and their surveys tend to be tick boxes not allowing for comments such as you have provided here. The issue is that spaces are available for famous artists' work, and cafes and corridors available for local artists. Not helpful for sculpture/installation artists and frankly insulting.

There is a definite 'correct' set of beliefs and ways of speaking that are in opposition to genuine freedom. Even the concept of Freedom of Speech has been branded a right-wing conspiracy.

It seems to me there is a degree of pressure to conform in the arts sector. This leads those who might not share certain unexamined assumptions to stay quiet rather than appear to be outside the circle of conformity.

The arts and cultural sector does not have any moral high ground in relation to individuals engaging respectfully with other people's views. Discussion of issues around representation for example can become very heated, and give rise to personal attacks. There are examples of ad hominem attacks being made on artists or companies who have received funding from the public purse – this is possibly a symptom of the competitive nature of the system. This can make people feel very cautious about raising their heads above the parapet.



There is a small space for left-wing liberal progressive opinions to express them. Anything dissenting from this is effectively censored by either not being funded or by being attacked on social media.

My openness as got me into trouble in past but unless you are free to speak out we are verging on big brother state, which is completely contrary to what I believe Great Britain is about

It depends on the artist and the Royal thinking people. Who can understand the feeling's about freedom of speech in the arts.

If an artist or professional is either linked to or working within an institution, there is a direct relationship between the work and/or statements made by that person and the roles the wider institution plays. While there is freedom to speak, choices can have an impact on one's professional life. This also affects collaborations between arts professionals working within a larger institution and those working freelance and/or in smaller institutions.

It's a very small sector with very little turnover in the workforce, particularly at a senior level, and frequently guilty of bubble group-think. There's the sense that what you say publicly, particularly online, could impact on your whole career if you don't get it right.

When working in the arts sector myself, as a freelancer, it feels sometimes as though voices my opinions in full which may be critical or be seen as being negative, may risk work. There's a general sense that everyone has the potential to be a future employer, so I wouldn't want to mess that up. Moreover, my role (as a producer) is about problem solving; and therefore it feels difficult to voice opinions about changes I'd like to see made, if I don't have a solution to offer with it. I also don't believe it is helpful to 'moan' about things, and that putting change in to action is much more useful; however discussing





experiences with others can be an essential part about putting about change.

I am an employee of an arts organisation and feel that I am protected by the support of my board if issues of complaints etc are raised around any comments I make, but this is not true for Disabled artists who want to criticise arts organisation for inaccessible attitudes etc. They feel that they will be labelled as a 'troublesome' artist which could make getting commissions etc more difficult. There is so much self censorship within the arts

Worried about the shouting. Slavery, colonialism, etc etc. The only dispassionate answer is to examine evidence and the truth.

My practice includes education so allowing for management attitudes tempers my work, being freelance I want to be employed in future.

There is a perception that some artists are hysterical/over-emotional which can lead to their views not being taken seriously

Public funding is increasingly a problem for freedom of speech (and a lot of other things too). I am always very aware that if you are critical of the government or the Arts Councils that you are probably putting your organisation at risk. I am in the process of severing my links with various NPOs or aspiring NPOs so I can safely speak out on the woeful state of arts funding and a radical alternative in a book next year. More widely I think that the arts and cultural sector in the UK is very poor at engaging with wider political and social issues beyond the odd well rehearsed woke comment here and there. Whether that's to do with freedom of speech or because of the rarefied nature of the arts and cultural workforce, it's hard to say.

Schools in England have practically banned the arts and freedom of speech with them.

It's very difficult to express an opinion that is different to the norm. It is assumed that as an arts professional we all have left leaning politics. Also in the name of making the arts more accessible there can be pressure to 'dumb down', or diminish the influence of professionals to give the public more of a platform – this can be demeaning at times.

I actually feel there is often very little room for open, healthy debate within our sector and I do often feel my freedom of speech is curtailed within our community. My work as an artist interrogates perspective which requires me to engage and empathise with individuals and communities who's opinions, personal experiences and political leanings frequently differ to mine. I have found it very difficult to find a space to engage my colleagues and collaborators in debates. Crudely speaking we could reduce this to an extreme left/right polarisation but it is far more complex than that. I can reconcile people not wanting to engage in the issues raised by my work – it is uncomfortable and this is a key motivator for me to make it. Where I see real issues is in how we talk about and approach participatory arts for 'hard to reach audiences'. This year I worked for an organisation for the first time in my freelance career and I was astounded by some of the conversations that took place in the context of participation and community engagement. Within this particular organisation I witnessed a troubling inability to truly engage, understand and empathise with some of the socio political contexts from which our target audience and participants are from. I often feel there is a latent left wing elitism that underpins the broader discourse around our sector that is dangerous and ultimately self-defeating. If we are to be the vanguards of freedom of expression, speech, humanity

and togetherness then we need to get over ourselves and find space for everyone in what we set out to create/deliver/facilitate. We need to learn how to truly set into other people's shoes otherwise we risk losing our capacity for the openness and debate which will/could/should ultimately lead us to true commonality.

An increasingly hard left wing agenda is limiting free speech.

In Australia nobody dares speak up as so little money around. The galleries are large controlled by the Far Right with a bare nod to other opinions same in the academies

You have to be careful not to bite the hand that feeds you!

I think it's tricky – there is a balance (always) in public life – shooting from the hip, or talking carelessly on social media can cause offence. However, I think there has been silence for years on bad working practices, power relationships and sexual misconduct – in particular in the theatre industry which it has felt really impossible to talk about. This is changing with regard to the #metoo movement, but often you are as an artist pretty powerless and it makes you rather wary....

Yes. We are, or should be, free to speak about anything.

I think there is a notional freedom of speech here but it tends to play as freedom to endorse slightly reified highly predictable and acceptable views of a generally liberal left kind – anything diverging from this is liable to find you out on a limb and effectively disqualified



It's hard for any working class artists to be seen and heard in the art world. Gaining experience, applying for work can cost too much money to even allow for submissions and entry fees. Poor pay doesn't allow some artists to take on work

I'm scared of openly discussing my opinion that people of any background should be able to tell any story, even if it's from a culture other than their own. I think it's wrong for people of, say, Indian origin to always have to write about Indian characters – but I think that what goes hand in hand with that is that middle class white people should also be able to write about characters and draw on stories from non-white non-middle class cultures. That seems to be an opinion that can get you publicly ostracised and I wouldn't ever say it except in private. I'm also to a lesser extent scared to openly give my opinion that some aspects of publishing are, directly and needlessly, causing writers to suffer from clinical anxiety and depression. I have mentioned this a few times on Twitter but I'd be scared to say too much, as it might make publishers less keen to publish me. This opinion is based on both my experiences and experiences of friends both published and unpublished. And the idea that speaking openly about it might scare away publishers isn't based on conjecture – when I had an agent, she advised me against saying such things. I found that very depressing.

Fear that any criticism online regarding Galway2020 will be recorded as a negative and could jeopardize any future funding.

Either you are safe so you can get a commission or being crass for attention. We've lost the rousing speeches and works of art. We are in a quagmire of wokeness and not offending people. We seem unable to discuss the issues in society without getting distracted about offending people, and having useful and important conversations and outcomes. There only seems to be two sides.

Pressure does exist on those of us who work for cultural organisations not to be controversial or speak out in conflict to the organisation's stated objectives or to use language that is not "controversial".

It's always a worry that speaking out will blacklist u. People in positions of power are nice



on the surface as they can be seen to be discriminatory. But I've had direct experience where this speaking out has led to reduced support for certain venues and orgs. Despite my speaking out being done for the betterment of the sector. It makes me sad and afraid and silenced.

Replying from Canada Federally our Canada Council for the Arts is at Arms Length from Government and so mostly protected from interference. However, the Council can feel an economic pinch if they are funding too many groups that speak out against those in power. This is more evident with our Conservative and other "right" governments. Provincially, the funders are closer to the organizations they fund and in some jurisdictions at some times there has been considerable pressure on arts organizations to behave. Now, if you compare Canada to say some eastern European countries the interference is inconsequential. Nobody is going to jail, they are just going to find it a bit harder to get Government funding. Our Province of Alberta under Premier Ralph Klien was particularly scary. His Conservative government used a number of tactics to try to silence the culture sector. Fortunately he didn't really succeed.

It is now taboo to even question the preponderance of trans visibility, I think anyone who is openly gender critical would be totally cast out in terms of getting roles.

We cannot speak freely because of fear of biting the hands that feed us... Both funders and venues (if we give critical feedback to a venue about staff, the manner of greeting and care, contracts, fees etc we risk never being booked again).

I think now more than ever that the Arts has a duty to be political. The UK is standing on

the precipice of a potentially big and damaging change for the sector and people need to have their voices heard. I am currently touring with a very political show and it is very liberating to be able to speak freely and in an uncensored way.

In terms of the above question, whereas I was 'always' able (as someone running a funded arts organisation' to speak publicly when my views or evidence was at variance with funders and others in the sector, the way austerity was handled radically changed that and I was told it 'wasn't helpful'.

Anxiety from Board Members re funding often curtails people being open about certain issues and situations.

Feel free to speak publicly about situations that are national, or have not occurred locally. However, feel more inhibited to speak out about local issues within the arts & culture sector.

So many of us who work independently are scared to rock the boat and speak truth to power. We're told we're empowered, but our only real power is to say no. We all know it's a small sector world and word gets around. And us independents there's enormous pressure to act like you're 'winning' all the time as to do otherwise diminished what cultural capital we do have. Complain and you risk being marked as a disgruntled loser. Few of us can afford to burn bridges.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to have open discussions on sensitive subjects without invested parties taking offence, reacting aggressively often before they have understood the points being raised. Knee jerk reactions are helpful to no-one.

I think that there is definitely a feeling that we have to follow the views of funders, in particular the Arts Council. In private colleagues absolutely rage against things the arts council are doing but in public nothing is said.

Funding is always an issue that has to be balanced with freedom of expression. Freely expressing views on issues which funding partners may find offensive could lead to the cessation of a strand of programming – and that benefits no one. Clearly, censorship, in any of its many forms, is unacceptable but biting the hand that feeds is counter productive. This provides a robust ethical test for arts leaders and, as long as the arts are underfunded, will be a journey with no end...

For the most part I've felt free to speak my mind/ air my views, but whilst I feel there is predominantly plenty of good will in the sector this isn't always followed through in actions. In a previous role, for example, I delivered an early-careers development programme which aimed to diversity the cultural workforce, empower young people to take agency over their own career paths & open up entry routes for communities who are traditionally excluded from sector roles (e.g. working class, BAME, NEET, etc.). However, the organisation's own pay structure and practice around upskilling & progressing employees (especially at a mid-junior level) was not great and (I felt at times) exploitative of employees passion and dedication to their vocation. On the occasions where I tried to raise this I felt the response was pretty poor with a bit of a 'we're not responsible / our hands are tied' air. In this sense I think you can feel pretty de-motivated and deterred from speaking out and challenging opinions and practices you feel are unethical because of the lack of action & dismissive response.

I find it depends on whom you are working, and whether how well acquainted you with other people on a group project. Some



are happy for you to have your say about the outcome, whilst others may want to message you about changing your posts or keep messaging you about what or how you can say something. It is an ethical mining field, especially when trying to promote your friends' project on your personal social media channels, where it should be how you want to say about the project rather than what they want you to say.

I am conscious of differing views about inclusivity, abortion and views on LGBT issues and know that if I express an opposing view to the "perceived" majority I will be shouted down.

I dare not say anything for fear of being castigated by the young, the PC people, etc

Paradoxically for an industry that has generally prided itself on its inclusivity, there is very little inclusion for those who do not have the 'right' views or have views which are considered problematic.

I feel creative people are able to express themselves more so than in other industries. I also feel women are more expressive than men in general (although not in whole) There are times when commenting on an issue you feel intimidated by language used and therefore inferior to others

It is doctinated by your employer, for fear speaking out will upset your pay master. Also, that you will never get another job, marked as a trouble maker.

Some of our responsibility is definitely to speak truth to power.

Sadly, my experience is that the arts sector has become highly censorious on a range of issues.

This is a trickier subject than might, at first, present, as if one works for a charity – and is commenting as a CEO or other employee of that charity – there are limits on what can be said politically. That's laid down in charity law, so it's a given...and frankly, that's the



trade-off for the various other benefits we receive. There's then the contractual censorship from big public sector funders, which STINKS! It used to be a condition of support from Birmingham City Council, but I always crossed it out.

Over time it has become increasingly difficult to be publicly critical of arts organisations and funding bodies in particular for fear of being seen to 'awkward' or 'challenging' – the irony of this being the case in the arts. This seems especially true for people working within organisations who are funded, and for artists who rely on those organisations for work. For example, where funding outrages (e.g. the Wise Children debacle; there are plenty of others) are revealed in publications like the AP, the response from the sector can feel at best muted in public regardless of any private anger.

Peer pressure, also through social media, getting worse – political correctness silences any deviation from mainstream: for example, only 'visible' diversity celebrated – no-one interested in the guy with the Polish passport, etc.

I feel that the freedom to be oneself and speak freely in the arts sector in general is hindered by multiple issues. It only "biting the hand that feeds" but leaders in the sector are resistant to change, many are egocentric, fearful of doing things in new ways or hearing alternative views, risk averse and less open-minded than (sometimes) colleagues with a different experience/knowledge/insight/perspective (insert differing age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, "experience level" etc here). Their needs to be a significant overhaul in the sectors ageing and elitist leadership.

Unfortunately, all too often our industry is built on nepotism and "playing the game" of

trying to ingratiate oneself with the big players. A reviewer friend of mine, discussing a fairly tepid production at a large regional theatre said, "[my review] is only free advertising for them. No point being critical, they'll just bury it and won't ask me back. Just chuck on an extra star and pretend it wasn't just a night out of the house!" Whilst cynical, this attitude tends to ring true across all sectors of the industry and whilst I'm a firm believer in being positive and working to give one another encouragement, that shouldn't come at the expense of freedom of speech. Art and the arts, at its very best is unflinchingly honest. The best works take our fears and foibles turn them round on us and make them confront them. To not be able to work on the same way in the industry that supports and develops this work is neither logical or healthy.

I feel that, as with much of public dialogue at present, it is becoming very polarised and aggressive. It is hard to question a POV without fear of a sort of reputational 'blacklisting'.

I feel like a lot of competitions, opportunities and programmes for funding for BAME artists is more skewed than investment opportunities realise. Often when preparing work to apply with I fear how much my blackness is a contributing factor. Do I stand out enough? I am born and bred British does that alter how useful my perspective is? I feel like my identity is purely a fashion trend that once mined enough will become faux pas and once I have overstayed my usefulness or my minority no longer seen as a percentile minority, those opportunities will go. It's why I am more focused on building steady investment to create apprenticeship opportunities of worth. To challenge return on investment knowledge so I can fund productions of artists from communities I have worked in as a mental health and unemployment advisor. There is talent there, who need



a little business praxis to stay successful enough to stay in the industry and speak out. The same struggle I have felt. I have almost left time again due to financial perimeters but by doing so I remove a BAME voice who is making work despite audience and investment restrictions not because of it.

Options may lead to lack of funding to support culture.

Bitting the hand that feeds is a fear of all charities and supported organisations – I'm sure that if organisations could rely on self generated funding, more there would be more freedom to voice opinion!

I think the problem for those of us that work in the non-profit arts sector, especially in leadership positions, is that we are accountable to so many people. We work for a board of directors / trustees that change regularly and are not always knowledgeable about the sector or even care deeply about what we do. We are accountable to the public that supports us, and that we would like to have support us. We are accountable to our funders and government agencies. We are accountable to the artists we work with, etc. Everyone seems to have an interest in what we do, or don't do – making it difficult to share personal views for fear of offending or alienating someone that supports us currently or may support us in the future.

Like most walks of life in the 2010s we are not free to speak especially as people are so easily upset by any remark that 20 years ago would have been shrugged off. I was brought up with "sticks and stones will break my bones but calling never hurts me" still so true for the vast majority of the populace. Society has increasingly moved towards favouring minorities rather than looking after the majority. Minorities as a consequence receive a disproportionate amount of funding, and often at the expense of the majority.



When I have spoken out about arts based issues, the effect of the present political environment on the cultural sector or the rising costs of arts engagement on social media, or shared articles online linked to these issues have been subject to A LOT of abuse. We recently attempted to build a new theatre locally, due to my online links to the organisation who proposed and supported the scheme, I've had to heighten my security setting, change my name and close my twitter account due to attacks and abuse online from others. I was also verbally abused by a stranger in a supermarket due to it, as my face was in a local magazine I association with the project; as well at a family non-work related event by a member of the public.

The performance reports of all funded arts organisations should be made more public.

With the arts relying so heavily on public spending, it's very difficult to feel one is free to express oneself on contemporary social issues of environmental, sexual, political and global relevance. It's particularly alarming when one sees news outlets and platforms, like the BBC, being so evidently and consistently gagged on these issues. As a professional working for an arms' length body, it has been explicitly relayed to me that I cannot express myself freely at all, and that addressing some topics publicly, such as Brexit, would lead to a disciplinary procedure.

Arms-length funding is important. Artists and groups feel they can not criticise govt for fear of punishment via funding mechanisms.

Where is the money coming from and/or who is in charge? Can you criticise the govt when you receive public subsidy, can you speak your mind when you know a major donor could be implicated, can you disagree with a national's director when frankly your job could be on the line? Probably not...

Women often get removed from conversations on panels, and get spoken over or told they



are too assertive. the industry has an issue with women.

Large organisations use their power as funders and givers of work to control the narrative by for instance cold shouldering and ignoring artists that assert their freedom of expression or challenge decision making when reasons for choices are not transparent.

I feel free to speak as a private person. I would not comment on issues relating to the museum I am involved with – business confidentiality is essential.

Freedom of speech often feel curtailed through fear. It's often a product of self-censorship or censorship by middle management. I think this means that it rarely comes up as an issue for decision makers as the problem has already been handily swept away for them by those below them.

Freedom of speech is closing down rapidly under a wave of 'wokeness' that makes everyone inhibited about they can say and do. This kills spontaneity and creativity stone dead.

I don't think in the UK there are any barriers to free speech, yes there may be adverse comments or even some negative media response or social media outrage, but that is really irrelevant in the scheme of things as good art endures.

Artistic content and expression is often closely linked to funders tastes and political position. The only artists that are really free to express themselves fully are self-funded and therefore low profile.

There is indeed a 'culture of fear' across the sector in respect of ACE, with people privately

saying things about the public funding system that they are too scared to express openly. In addition there is a somewhat cosy sense of entitlement amongst the larger operators, which has continuity going back to 1946! The code-dependence of the Arts Council and its 'established' clients amounts to a sort of semi-corrupt freemasonry which alleged reforms never really address. Furthermore the DCMS is equally part of this unacknowledged conspiracy – terrified of being accused of breaching the arm's length principle, and too scared of the potential backlash from major museums and galleries and ACE's highest profile clients should it intervene to address failings. It's also a fact that certain ACE-favoured dependents can sail through funding rounds when the evidence is that they fail on key questions, but they are permitted to succeed while other (newer) applicants fail for opaque reasons which are never open to proper public scrutiny. The fact that the Arts Councils have control of BOTH Treasury funding and the Lottery funds (not least at a time when local government cultural support is disappearing) is a major national disaster.

Yes. The sector is dominated by few individuals or companies and rightly or wrongly some of them tick box diversity by working only with a particular diverse group/community. Lack of risk taking. Support is only verbal and good at passing the bucket from one to the other.

Because so much of our artistic workforce is reliant of self employed work, it feels there is no freedom of speech in the arts at times, or it is reserved for those who hold positions of power. By position of power I don't mean only the 'usual faces' or the privileged. But also those who won't have to worry about where next months pay is coming from or those who will get so much press about speaking out that they can become a freedom of speech



hero and gain more work than they had before. What about the people who don't have any platform? Or friends in high places or people to turn to for advice? I have spoken out my entire career – where safe to do so, and it has certainly damaged my career. Being a diverse person, speaking from a diverse location has often led me to have the 'popular opinion' and ask/expect more accountability around diversity and equality. Which many don't want.

I am free to speak publicly but, in truth, I sometimes keep opinions to myself for fear of being misunderstood, or deliberately misinterpreted, or discounted. Depends on the forum. Social media is not a place to have any kind of debate (or indeed express any strongly held views) as the anonymity of others means you have no idea who you are addressing.

There is an issue with some politicians who will block artists because of their political views.

Too much well being, too little art. Arts have been led into serving health and social issues at the expense of artistic creativity.

Always nervous about criticising Arts Council!

I think there are many issues surrounding, positions, transparency and pay when it comes to jobs and work in the cultural sector. I've never felt able to talk about bad practices of previous or at the time current employers and felt safe to do so.



Raising awareness of issues that challenge or expose the cultural sector can affect your ability to gain the connections needed to raise funds for projects. Being a whistle blower can also affect your ability to get contracts or jobs. The industry does not have the financial mechanism's in place to support cultural sector

employees that raise issues and find themselves out of employment whilst doing so.

I am aware of local, regional and national instances of nepotism, misuse of funds and mismanagement. Simultaneously the arts and cultural sector feels increasingly like it is being run by a smaller and smaller number of people with the resources to document and publicise their work in ways that create wide visibility and gain traction for their opinions. Some of these are the same people. I have had the experience of asking one pointed question in a public forum that made me lose out on a couple of commissions and be treated like an outsider in my own city because the person I addressed the question to didn't like being asked it. I will not make the same mistake again.

I am afraid you are only considering this issue regarding Brexit or China, yet what about Spain? I am aware media are not tackling Spanish repression given that it is a "European" country, however many Catalan actors or writers cannot speak out freely fearing reprisals.

There is definitely a culture of being careful what you say and you're constantly monitoring your words and sticking to a script dependant on your audience. You know who holds the power positions, the power couples and whether you're in the 'club' (or not).

I have the privilege of having a background in art history. This has made me more aware and resilient when expressing publicly my opinions on issues affecting the arts sector. Unfortunately, art history, and by extension its non-academic auctioneering/trade route, is dominated by people from the upper classes. It is not viable to discuss issues within art without examining themes of classicism and class divide, but this is impossible when the trade sector of art is so governed by the very same upper classes which fine art so often scrutinises. Another interesting thing I have noticed is that it is really quite hard to express opinions that go against the commonly-accepted art canons (sounds odd to contribute this to a field whose primary occupation is to fight canons and echelons, and yet it is still very true). Picasso is not the greatest artist to have ever lived. Art is not only



Euro-American and Euro-American art is not the only type of art that exists. The legacy of mid-late 20th century experimentalism does not mean that all contemporary and post-contemporary art must focus on being reactionary and 'avant-garde'.

The politics of free speech is a hugely problematic subject, one person's idea of free speech could be offensive to someone who identifies with the topic freely spoken about.

I feel it's very much about current trends more than individualism. I am multiracial, a woman and a mum. I feel pressured into promoting myself as a 'black' artist from other black artists and the 'white' establishment when I really want to focus on my personal life experiences, emotions, desires and fantasies without being specific about race issues as I feel that will come through anyway whether I deliberately try to or not. I feel as though there are many barriers to my personal expression such as proving income to working tax credit self employment or pressure to find work, limited time, children and feeling as though I don't fit neatly into a social box. I like to express myself through furniture too, which is also an area I find myself struggling with in regards to acceptance from the arts

In Palestine we do not have censorship from the government but we have self censorship on certain taboo issues related to our community. We provoke audiences but we know how far we could do that and in diverse communities.

I believe my honesty is what has caused at least 3 of my redundancies over the years. An arts organisation loves to recruit someone enthusiastic, outspoken and confident, but then they start to feel threatened by the same attributes further down the line.

I feel it is arguable that programming is more risk averse these days with people worrying

about perceptions of people over reacting to Theatre / Arts that takes a more political or radical stance.

I sometimes feel worried about the relationships between artists and cultural organisations if I were to talk freely about the things I feel. Perhaps worried that certain views or expressions could preclude me from future work or partnerships. Speaking honestly about the disparity between artists' needs and organisations' ability to assist could certainly prove problematic unless a two way dialogue is open and all sides are willing to listen.

Freedom to speak and to be able to take part in purposeful discussions and debates is crucial to be able to learn from each other, to inspire and innovate and to find solutions to overcome challenges and barriers.

I feel like I have to be very careful when commenting on the industry, as making negative comments can easily come across as bitchy – my biggest worry here is out customers. I'm an event manager, and stating something negative (the reality) in the event industry can easily be met with resistance on the attendee side as they do not know the reality of what it means to organise an event and would not be aware of everything that goes on behind the scenes. On the other hand, you want to make sure you don't start a 'war' with your competitors and stay professional.

I have always been outspoken about my views on the state of UK arts sector, particularly in reference to private and public funding for the arts (speaking as a fundraiser), and in reference to my views on Arts Council England's role in supporting arts and culture

organisations across England and how efficient it is in doing so. I do this with sense of assurance that the views I have will be supported by others in my organisation who feel the same way, and who would also agree with me about the wider economic and political climate that has served to shape the arts funding landscape quite significantly over the past 10 years. But even now as I write this, I feel an almost compulsive urge to be euphemistic, indirect or elusive about what it is that I really mean. I do think twice about the exact words I use when speaking out about major policy decisions affecting the arts and culture sector, particularly where major public funders are involved. The idea of “biting the hands that feeds” is definitely pertinent here. We can and should critique policy decisions that affect our sector, but I am often nervous to do so for fear of seeming ungrateful or militant within a sector which rests so precariously from one budget to the next. Having said that, I am conscious that my background (i.e. white, middle class, university educated, and with a comfortable network of peers and colleagues with broadly the same socioeconomic profile as me) affords me a certain platform which enables me to be more outspoken than many of my friends and colleagues who do not have this same level of privilege. I feel a certain amount of risk in speaking out honestly about a number of different issues, but there is always this background sense of assurance that my voice will be heard and my opinion respected.

I think there’s so much political correctness dominating the arts and cultural sector’s conversations that, paradoxically, freedom of expression is jeopardised. It’s a real shame as we are supposed to push boundaries and take risks, move forward and nurture ‘out of the box’ thinking, but we end up being almost brainwashed by what’s acceptable and meant to be said, while taking extra care at not hurting anyone’s feelings. I feel a little embarrassed to speak out in case it affects future



working relationships and opportunities in the sector.

I think freedom of speech is vital. But the way that it comes about should never be a surprise to donors or stakeholders of the arts organisation. It’s about respect, which is a two-way thing. It’s not the arts, but if you support Amnesty or Greenpeace, you sign up precisely because you expect outspoken campaigning, delivered in sometimes unorthodox ways. Likewise, the organisations also feel they have licence to campaign in unorthodox and (sometimes confrontational) ways. The tensions arise when sensitive issues are presented by arts organisations, in unexpectedly confrontational ways, or which aren’t part of that organisation’s traditional narrative. Donors can feel blindsided. And so they should have the right to end their support. Why shouldn’t they?

Most contracts of employment have a clause excluding press or public correspondence concerning the employer and by extension, any industry issues affecting the employer.

The fact that you need to ask the above question says more about the state of the arts today.

People in the arts are very active on social media, and that brings pressure not to agitate. There is a strong pressure to be the most woke on all subjects. Extreme policing of views that challenge that in any way. A strong sense within the arts that only a certain kind of political/social view is acceptable.

Think there is a danger that we are creating an echo chamber in the arts sector. If I held a right leaning view, I would not articulate it in public. I worry about intolerance whether it is from the right or the left. I feel people self moderate a lot in order to fit in. Hence I’m able to answer ‘No’ to the question below.

Firstly this is a great topic to open up because I think I and my arts colleagues struggle with this. 1. The pool is small. Entrepreneurialism in the arts is scant and funding sources



monolithic. There is a culture of “network politicking” rather than speaking out that drives the sector. Many of us are uncomfortable with or not suitably networked to do the former.

2. The culture of the arts. Polite, challenge-averse, middle-class, passive-aggressive and protectionist are some of the particularities of the funded arts sector. For people not of middle-class English culture, finding the right way to say something so that it is heard takes up way too much time and energy.

I think freedom of speech is vital. I personally hold by the desire to be kind too. I think often impact is created by how something is said rather than what is said and believe we should be kind.

My perspective is mainly as a freelancer, which has so many issues re: freedom of speech. Freelancers are (understandably) so afraid to speak out too much about sector issues, because they have little/no job security, so aggravating their employers may well just lead to them not being hired again – or that’s the worry. This leads to issues like poor payment practice from employers, lack of clarity, and intimidation or harassment, with people too worried of speaking out for themselves, let alone for other people. But I still try and do it when I can, and encourage others to do the same.

In England people seem very reticent in speaking out in any critical way about the sector and in particular about funders and the establishment. Feeling freedom of expression or not determines who feels they are able to speak freely – some in the sector are in a position where they already have a sense of freedom of expression, others feel they have to fight to be heard or represented. Some do fight, many stay quiet. I think there are much wider societal issues for people in marginalised situations and freedom of speech and this

is reflected in the arts and cultural sector.

Yes. Free speech is free speech and should always be observed.

I find the problem is not so much not having freedom of speech but the constrictions put on public money by gatekeepers who are not accountable – people in large network organisations totally funded from the public purse who are called upon to give their opinions in meetings which are not transparent or accountable. This is so much easier for employees charged with giving out public finance than consulting with lots of smaller groups and individual artists. It is important to ensure that public money is transparent and accountable but that also the consultation processes of how it is spent follow the same procedures.

I feel that as the arts in the UK is often funded by public bodies, we are, by association, restricted in our opinions if they are in conflict with popular opinion, or seen as inappropriate.

If anything, it has become important to go along with the prevailing view. Stepping outside the bubble to challenge issues particularly around identity, is asking for trouble. At the same time, it’s become increasingly possible for voices to be heard on issues of identity. That’s a very good thing indeed. But nuanced views are barely permitted. You are either with us or you’re against us. The arts is as polarised as the rest of society at the present moment.

If you are not speaking in line with others there can be a very uncomfortable backlash which can affect your ability to work – as a random example: disagree with/ ‘offend’ one

casting director and 'word gets round' shall we say. It doesn't take long before you realise that you're being blackballed. This can come from a completely innocuous view expressed in audition, on social media, in a conversation etc. If you are dealing with controversial issues and don't agree with the generally 'accepted view' of the industry you can find progress blocked and funding not forthcoming. In many cases it doesn't pay to speak with a different voice when the 'establishment' within the industry have decide what the consensus should be.

I would be hesitant to speak out about anything directly related to the company I am currently working for or people I am currently working with.

It's extremely repressive. Fears of job-loss and labelling are widespread. I work in the Independent sectors as a freelance and so have more freedom than some. Shortage of funding/work is central. Equity and the S.E. Regional TUC have both created detailed and extensive proposals for a distributive Arts Funding policy, consultative, properly paid and crossnational.

I spent 16 years working as a grants officer for Lottery and trust funders in the arts/ cultural sector. Following this, since 2009 I have worked on the other side of the fence: as a fundraiser. I'd like to comment on two, arguably linked, areas which relate to freedom of speech in the cultural sector. Based on my career experience, I would comment that the quality of funding assessments and interactions can now be superficial and poor,

but this cannot be openly discussed. I was working for a large private trust when the 2009 financial crash happened. Their investments lost their yield, and the trust funders cut funding budgets and staffing. This, I believe, has impacted the quality of assessments, and the development of proposals and the way funders interact with their applicants. Concurrently, in the last decade, trust



funders and Lottery distributors have also felt the impact of cuts in public funding and to the welfare sector. The (socially greater?) need for welfare support has impacted funders, in terms of a substantial growth in applications for support of (non cultural) projects from the mainstream charity sector and increased emphasis on the 'instrumental' role of cultural projects: not "art for arts sake", but art largely for the purposes of 'solving' social problems. Art has always had a social purpose, but I feel the emphasis has gone too far. I see poor quality arts and heritage projects being supported, largely because they appear to address a social need. I believe artistic excellence plays second fiddle to this directive, but it seems unacceptable to voice the opinion that this may be an inauthentic and, ultimately, a very weakening position for arts and culture to take. I can see the political imperative, but political imperatives may be passing fashions. As an arts fundraiser, and even with my previous substantial experience of working for a range of grant funders, I feel I might find myself out of a job and, arguably, unemployable – and certainly not funding-achievement successful – were I to publicly expand on what I have written in this survey. I would, however, still like to do so, if any publication were interested in making journalistic enquiry.

Sometimes I don't feel completely free to speak about my personal feelings or views on partnerships my place of work has, or the funders we get money from. To do so might seem controversial, and there is a bit of a sense of 'just get on with things and accept it'.

I make no criticisms of PRC, it is too risky. Important to self-censor in case of retribution heaped upon friends and family.

The idea that charities have to be "non-political" is close to untenable in a situation where the government is making an assault on anything worthwhile. Our work in the arts and culture is deeply related to political contexts, and we need to be able to speak out. There are also strong agendas from many funders around "impact" and "diversity", which





constrain freedom of speech. These areas of debate would benefit from a more dynamic interaction of ideas, rather than the expectation that all artists will follow the same party line. Much funding is now allocated on the basis of political ideologies being expressed or followed, rather than on the basis of creative energy – but we are still expected to be “non-political”. It’s absurd.

Not really but, there again, we’re a small, unsubsidised, visual arts company tucked away in South Leeds; we generate in the region of £200,000 through Trusts, Foundations and Unrestricted income. Without subsidy, we have no constraints imposed by funders. Our work is citizen / community-led and, possibly, the views on the topics in which we engage are generally widely held: austerity, deterioration of social and health support, isolation and loneliness. I am the director here and formally held senior positions at FACT, HTBA, South Bank as well as extended periods working for ACE in programmes related to the distribution of national lottery funds via Capital Services. For me, ‘freedom of speech’ is a function of respect for the other view and the responsibility to present my view. In my experience ‘freedom of speech’ is often bandied about when people want to make forcefully held generalisations or ill-informed accusations often driven by the policies of envy or fear of funding being under threat.

Freedom of speech, especially in the arts & cultural sector is a fundamental cultural & human right and should be respected as such, given that the very role of the arts & culture is to challenge norms and ask difficult questions.

It is clear that those in more economically vulnerable positions or lower down in hierarchical structures face far greater pressures to be more ‘conservative’ in their views.

They often have few ‘safe platforms’ upon which to question the status quo and cultural institutions seldomly provide these, even internally. Overall due the relative fragility of the sector and the lack of support from Arts Council England in terms of championing challenging and disruptive output many organisations have become incredibly wary of creating product that is controversial or divergent from the norm. Much of this activity is now only undertaken by much smaller, often non-subsidised organisations and individuals and consequently lacks reach and subsequent traction.

There is huge left-wing bias. Even in the way this survey was introduced – example given of attempts to shut down anti-brexite exhibition. In the arts world it would be far more controversial to have people standing up for an exhibition in favour of Brexit. There are plenty of ordinary people – not racist, not bigoted – who, for perfectly legitimate reasons (the main ones being democracy and accountability) want to leave the European Union. It is a very tricky and unsafe view to express. I don’t see many people from the arts world leaping to defend my freedom of expression in this respect.

Very concerned about women’s rights in the cultural sector at present. Transgender activism is being portrayed as essential equality, but there is no discussion about the impact on women’s rights and our equality. We seem to be compartmentalising everything and everyone in a race to the bottom of one-down-man-ship for who wins in the category of most oppressed. We need to be more open, questioning, considerate and responsible.

Biting the hand that feeds is always a hard one, especially when your future depends on it.



Care required where making comments that somehow affect revenue streams (funding, income, sponsorship etc).

Organisations with charitable status have to tread carefully when commenting on current affairs, social or political issues. In so far, this status is restrictive and demands self-censorship. Individually, the pressure always to present success discourages speaking out on problems within an organisation's managerial and artistic practice.

Whilst I'm happy to say my opinions, I'm often slightly worried that doing so will jeopardise my future relations with institutions and organisations. It's a small world and there's often a feeling that you need to keep people on-side.

To simply put it, to speak up about about issues in the arts and cultural sector can result in damaging your career. If you dare shed light on how the 'big theatres' truly handle certain situations you'll find yourself black listed.

Freedom of speech in the arts sector is always dependent on who is listening and in which context. Opinions on what freedom is being discussed in a conversation about exhibition or work is always about whether it is of interest to the programming of the institution concerned. Hence, most artists have to temper their opinions in favour of the institution just too gain favour or a job. Largely closed off, the circles of some institutions act like they are the artists and not the artists themselves.

The arts and cultural sector can be very prescriptive at times.



It is difficult when working in a multi agency setting to vocalise personal political views, and possibly counter productive when trying to build connections with others from a different viewpoint. I am a lifelong Labour party voter in a Brexit constituency – trying to build grass roots links. Perhaps I

am being cowardly and feeble, or just trying not to alienate. Difficult to differentiate sometimes...

There is no freedom of speech in the arts sector. It is so politically correct that you dare not challenge anything that is unfair or seems wrong. Most arts people are extremely middle class and talk around issues and never say what they mean. If your direct, honest and open your accused of being confrontational. If your working class your constantly hauled up for saying apparently inappropriate things. Everyone is paranoid about losing their jobs so just keep quiet.

I've never felt constrained in our ability to express my or my organisations views.

None.

Vested interests and unfair power in the hands of the commissioners make it difficult for artists and creators to speak freely.

Arts council continually displays bad practice and conflicts of interest and it's almost impossible to flag it up because they are our main funder. There needs to be some sort of independent whistle blowing place that complaints about ACE could be taken to – not their internal complaints department.

There is no freedom of speech if you don't align with the prevailing viewpoint of practitioners or public funders in the sector.

See the What Next/ Index on Censorship toolkit.

Yes – there is an unspoken orthodoxy which is currently deeply embedded within the arts sector and its funders – it is based on assumptions that we all agree with each other.

I think 'cancel culture' is the biggest threat to freedom of speech within the arts sector. We must have freedom of expression in the arts for ALL – not just those that are culturally



'woke' – and we need to ensure we fight for the rights of artists from a wide range of cultural and political perspectives. Unfortunately, even the write up advertising this survey (I received by email) appeared to have a political bias.

I am now in my 70s and so have nothing to lose, financially or otherwise, by speaking out. Older age can be liberating. And also provide decades of experience which allows 'historical' reference to examples and cases which younger arts workers may have not known about or forgotten. So i capitalize on my profile as an unafraid speaker-out , and my track record of having run several venues and companies and set up a few. My younger colleagues, experiencing arts cuts and threats of more, and in competition with each other for the dwindling funding available, tend to be restrained, especially those at senior levels in arts organisations. They want to indicate how informed they are on cultural policy, political approaches etc but rarely comment or criticise, lest it puts them into a negative relationship with key funders or government departments. The reduction of funding to the arts has encouraged safe approaches to programming, so speaking out through projects and programme content has also declined.

The cultural sector has been in the vanguard of radical opinion. One of the results of this is the industry is increasingly involved in projects which increase broad involvement and power has shifted away from artists to administration, particularly in regard to public subsidy. The net result is that the career of the conservatoire trained professional artist who merits payment for their work has been increasingly under pressure.

Our sector is based on mutual recognition of unspoken networks of powers and association and it doesn't have independent watchdog units that deal with issues such as sexual

harassment, racism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, unfair working conditions. It is impossible to speak about those issues in relation to specific organisations if not in general terms. There is also a prevalent white middle-class/private school love for debate that is happy to allow in the discussion racist, transphobic, homophobic, xenophobic, classist, & so on perspectives in the name of 'freedom of speech' that protect the perpetrators instead of the victims.

My experience over many years in the broadcast tv media is that it has a deep-rooted left-wing bias, and this has only got more embedded over time. It is always assumed that I am left-wing, or at the very least a leftish centrist. There is widespread, unquestioned groupthink on many issues. It is inconceivable to speak freely on a number of topics and keep your career intact – issues including, but not limited to, Israel, transgender ideology, multiculturalism, Brexit. Often the mainstream majority view of the public is regarded in the industry as outlandish and bizarre.

The arts sector is extremely conservative – and publicly stating opinions outside of the received ideology can have serious negative effects on your career.

Like many sectors, social media has radicalised and narrowed debate and discussion in the arts and cultural sector. I notice online bullying, self-surveillance and vigilantism. Those who have cultural capital can speak out and have a following who will protect them. Those who do not benefit from cultural capital or power in the sector cannot talk about experiences they have had without fear of being black listed by potential employers or being bullied online. It is also next to impossible to have nuanced discussions about how we move forward as a sector and indeed, a society. The sector feels sectarian (but that just

reflects daily life). Because there are not robust mechanisms to deal with bullying, poor pay, lack of opportunities and nepotism and, people cannot speak out, some have built careers out of manipulating dissatisfaction in the sector to gain notoriety – rather than encouraging collective bargaining and community building away from the international art world.

Curators, institutional directors, arts organisations and funders love talking about freedom of expression but hate it when anybody – especially artists – are seen to be rocking the boat. Critical artists, especially female ones, are frequently labelled as difficult for pointing out fairly basic issues of equity and power imbalances.

The arrival of the phenomenon of social media-driven witch-hunting of artists who express unpopular views has had chilling effect on artists, critics, curators, academics and others. The worst aspect of these campaigns – led from the ‘bottom up’ rather than imposed by administrators, directors or managers (though these often get involved) – has been in their explicit targeting of individuals’ livelihoods: freelance artists’ teaching gigs, academics’ teaching posts, disinviting artists groups from having a public platform through which they might access commercial opportunities and so on.

I have sent letters to individual members of the board of trustees highlighting how the official institutional archival narrative about its own history has altered over time. I have requested that this matter be added to a board meeting agenda so the current public account it gives about itself can be discussed at a minuted board of trustee meeting. The current public story it gives now, can be shown to seriously distort the how the board of trustees acquired control of a newly built flagship venue and its associated ACE revenue funding. The letters did not get a reply. It is therefore apparent that it not possible to formally raise any questions about



the narrative the board of trustees chooses gives to the public about its role in securing public resources for itself. I have been informed that just like most cultural institutions it has been constituted in such a way that makes it exempt from needing to respond to any freedom of information requests. This makes discussion with the board of trustees impossible.

I am concerned there is wish to silence women and lesbians at present, there seems to be far too many activists pushing an agenda that over rides women and gay women’s right to define themselves.

Yes! Plenty. The most recent examples of being punished for exercising my freedom of speech: 1. I lost paid freelance work as a result of a facebook comment that I posted where, in the spirit of Lenny Bruce, I made a very short, humorous, but poignant remark against a transgendered academic who was exposed in The Times newspaper for orchestrating a smear campaign against other academics across the UK, in which universities were described as dangerous and accused of “hate crime” if they refused to accept trans-activists’ views that biological males can be women. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/trans-goldsmiths-lecturer-natacha-kennedybehind-smear-campaign-against-academics-f2zqbl222> My facebook comment was screen grabbed/shot by an arts worker who I knew, who eventually used it against me when I defended an artist called Nina Edge, on social media, who was under investigation for defending women only prisons: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lecturer-s-job-fear-after-raising-trans-concerns-dstp8p7zz> I, along with artist Nina Edge, was called a transhobe on social media, with the screenshot used as “evidence”, and arts organisations who contracted me were tagged. Between April 2019 – May/June 2019 I was subsequently dropped as a judge for an art competition by arts council funded New Art Exchange Gallery in Nottingham, dropped as an artist mentor for Bloomberg New Contemporaries, Artquest and University



of the Arts London. I was also cancelled by Lighthouse Brighton as co-speaker/chair with an artist whom I was working for, who invited me to chair a post-show discussion. I was a mentor for Bloomberg New Contemporary Artists and UAL art students for 4 years, I have not been invited as a mentor for 2019/2020 because of this online 'call-out' culture. I was also reprimanded, threatened, screamed at, shouted at, bullied by my ex-boss because of my public online, published writings, media interviews and comments in support of Brexit from May 2016 to December 2017, and for giving my opinion to the New York Times about the near-censorship of Andrea Dunbar's play by the Royal Court Theatre. Even my fellow colleagues who may not agree with me, thought it was a step too far in attempting to control and silence me. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/14/theater/london-theater-cancels-play-rita-sue-and-bob-too.html> Arts organisations will not hesitate to throw someone under the bus rather than make a principled position that what I say on my personal social media platforms has nothing to do with the work I do as a service provider or employee. I have always made it public that my views are my own and never represent the organisations I work for.

### **Q5 Please give more details of the type of pressure you have felt and the circumstances around this.**

I have been asked on multiple occasions – as a person of colour – to define diversity or bring forward suggestions (as an individual) to address the marginalisation of underrepresented groups in the industry. I have been told by members of the public that the work I'm doing is 'reverse racism'.

Sometimes the criticism is personal, primarily for some arts critics, some criticism demands things the institution's mission is not responsible for offering. For example, should an art museum offer free senior lunches or public day care? Nope, that's not the job of an art museum.

Should an art museum seek to represent all of the existing community in its exhibition selections? Usually that is a good criticism, but for many older institutions, the pivot to full representation is a very slow one, one that may involve acquisition funds, a change in the institutional mission or policies, etc. The big question for many institutions is, "What is our community"? What does that mean?

Pressure to not be so opinionated and to stay quiet.

My local community it feels like if you work with the wrong organisation you won't get support from the others in the area. It feels very much like Mean Girls locally. "oh, you worked on that project with X, so we'll ignore your requests for support on this new project that doesn't involve X" or "if you work with us you can't work with Y" etc. Which as a freelancer is extremely damaging. I've also seen an organisation offer space on a free basis

to someone I was working with, double book it, then the person I was working with had to spend a fortune, ending up not paying themselves a fee for their work, to pay for that space somewhere else, but as the artists were contracted they couldn't do anything about it with less than 2 weeks notice. Neither of us have been able to do anything about that, I don't feel like I can warn many of the other organisations that might work with them that this happened and to be careful. It would be fine if it's a one off, but I have heard hearsay about similar things happening to others. I'm also 30, so aged out of many opportunities for development aimed at emerging artists due to my age, however so don't feel I can criticise this in case I am seen as "difficult" or "demanding." Also there are nearly no local schemes supporting artist development in my region, NPOs elsewhere seem to offer a lot but here I have to travel to London all the time, which makes it pretty expensive. I can't say anything about that because I need the NPOs to support me to try to run a project to offer the support to others I would like the NPOs to provide, as it is I am ignored while I try to improve things this way and am too scared to speak out.

I have been called a racist by a director while rehearsing for a play that included themes around racial conflict and prejudice. The writer (a friend) and director were both black while I am white.

We got over it and successfully staged the play. I have been called a misogynist by several critics while playing a misogynist. These critics seemed unable to distinguish between the role and the actor. I restrict my statements on social media, self-censoring to avoid reputation risk issues.



- 1 Been bullied since I expressed a genuine concern. On one occasion gave a feedback that was critical which as asked.
- 2 The director of a company my line manager didn't safeguard confidentiality.

It often comes when making an unwelcome observation that causes discomfort. An unpopular comment. A surprising comment to the majority group. I have been on a panel where the chair just decided not to let me speak and go to the audience.

I have provoked reaction from posts on social media, but generally speaking I receive more support than dispute.

With their take on instrumental value of art.

There is a pressure to concede to current 'trends' in the arts. As a socially engaged artist, I have often witnessed large sums of money going to projects that do not engage the communities they are meant to connect with, and instead public monies are spent creating work for an arts audience – an audience of half a dozen people rather than tens or hundreds. Conversely, I have seen excellent arts programmes dismissed as 'community art' or 'street art'. Yet to speak out would be dismissed as 'sour grapes' or 'biting the hand that feeds'. I am resilient and have forged an excellent career in the arts for which I am grateful, and I know how to 'play the game' when I have to in terms of networking etc. Yet even in the last year I have seen two excellent, bright, talented and outspoken colleagues and friends – one BAME and one from an extremely working class background – turn away from the arts completely as they have felt too battered and disillusioned. The arts are full of cronyism. In another incident, in a safeguarding training session, a number of colleagues discussed the fact that there was a known bully that no-one would challenge as he had been working in the arts for many years. Later I ended up working with this bully – and he was – and as someone who is known to stand up to bullies, this led to the Board finally dismissing him. In this instance I felt 'set up', and unsupported by a Board. There have been many other instances – particularly when I was younger and more outspoken – at one point working for ACE I challenged the budget that had been allocated to a marketing company – only to come into my office early one morning to find a senior





colleague going through my drawers. I love the arts and feel lucky that this is my career BUT I think bad practice & cronyism run through the core.

Around exhibits that are racists, about engagement that are un/consciously biased with the audience/participants, when big organisations use small community groups to fulfil their targets but will not credit the community organisation or worst scrutinise them in top-down ways and show distrust as they feel threatened, when disabled or artists of colour are still the face on the brochure but otherwise very little else happens about inclusive practice, when as a participant I challenge another who tells me to get out without challenge from the organisations, when there is a hierarchy of 'inclusion' where its not ok to be ablelist but ok to behave racist – I could go on ....

Because I spoke of the lack of ethics and political will, I am rarely asked to meetings and to speak publicly as I used to be.

Being accused of lack of consideration Attacked for opinions Threatened by unknown social media trolls The pressure that is you express an honest opinion you might lose out on work from official funders & organisations.

I don't feel comfortable doing this.

Sometimes if subject matter is controversial I feel fearful to speak out in support or against it in some friendship groups, I guess I wimp out!

There is a pressure that arts workers must work for free for a good few years before finally being expected to accept low wages (regularly below living wage) in return for the honour of "doing what they love" for a job. This comes from all areas – I am regularly asked to work

pro bono and companies are amazed when I turn down such wonderful exposure – but it is pure slavery and exploitation which must be made illegal.

As a director I have been pressured to hide or perhaps not completely reveal facts from other board members so as not to involve them completely all the while, in my opinion, jeopardizing the organisation. In the end, I revolted against this and my position was not renewed. What I had predicted for the next 3 years did in fact arrive and today, the organisation is a shadow of itself. Retribution? No and sadly all could have been avoided but for board members who thought themselves better than the directors they hired!

My experience is that innovation is not welcomed in an arts sector where power over funding is held by far too few players. Even (and perhaps especially) initiatives designed to attract new source of funding to the arts and new sources of earned income attract a surprising degree of resistance from a sector and peer group organisations who should welcome the diversification of funding. Change is threatening, of course, but the arts have been left in a demoralised place, characterised by the politics of scarcity. This can result in resistance, and even occasional viciousness, to individuals and organisations that are merely trying to assist the arts and grow the size of the cake for everyone. This has included, in my experience, false claims and reports to arts funders, ostracism and the sabotage of promising collaborative projects. I have learnt to regard this as merely part of the experience of working in the arts, and of trying to make positive change. But outsiders can sometimes express utter astonishment to me about the sheer unpleasantness of a sector that is supposed to be about human plenitude. The arts sector has been compared unfavourably (in my hearing, and by people who should know) with sectors as notorious



as property development and commercial litigation.

Oppression, traits, financial abuse and exhaustion, and all other notorious typical methods...

Everything from silent disapproval, subtle distancing to outright classic “we cannot work with you as we don’t feel we can support you” and “I’m not continuing this conversation with someone that has such views” The real irony is that these administrators are the beneficiaries of artists like me – working class artists that took on the high art of the 80’s & 90’s to challenge their myopia. Now we’re accused of being fascists for stating biological realities, daring to disagree and strongly supporting freedom of speech. Rather than tearing everything down. Resilience and ethical toughness is acquired by facing those views we find abhorrent. Oh and the classic “I could lose my job and then how can we change things?” Pfffft!

Being a BAME female in the sector I feel my voice / opinions are often ignored or shut down usually by men. With social media I’m cautious about paying anything remotely contentious for fear of reprisals as I have seen the impact it’s had on others when they have posted something I agree with but have been silenced by others. We can’t seem to have an open clear debate about issues – everything is suddenly black or white with no greys out other colours allowed to be voiced.

Have experienced not be allowed by bosses to participate the study dialogues to discuss about censorship and how to reform the better environment of funding organisations. Pressured by bosses and colleagues not to say personal thought in the meeting. Not accepted to name the project in relation to “Diversity”.

Working in public art commissioning, it’s common for contractors



to bully and re-neg on previously agreed aspects of a commission. There have been numerous situations when in a group meeting bullying has occurred as a tactic to try and diminish the validity of the art teams requirements. This may also be a case of not realising the value of the creative sector and seeing it as a waste of time and money – a common misconception amongst many corporates.

Conformity is always key. Arts education has to fit in with tick-box exercises, and if programmes and projects are written without conformity, funding and support usually disappears.

Colleagues are frightened to say anything that draws attention. The press only engage with press releases so they don’t investigate. Funders dictate because they think they should and Government are acting on dishonest reporting.

The systems are set up to encourage partnership working. In some areas of very low arts activity there are few people and organisations operating, therefore funders push partnerships with those people or organisations. Large organisations and government bodies are especially set up to protect themselves and their employees. This often gives those employees license to behave in whatever way they like, with impunity – there is no system of redress. Individuals and small companies do not have the resources, financially or emotionally, to take legal action, even when the grounds are solid, evidenced and witnessed – they have to find ‘self-care’ ways of dealing with situations – and the funders who pushed the relationships in the first place do not have any systems for addressing or even acknowledging that.

When creating a work or choosing a piece it must be considered pc by administrators who are not arts professionals If you don’t fit their bill you’re out. Funders need to look through programmes and ask why it’s always the same faces.



The first and worst time was being harassed off [REDACTED] because I expressed and advocated views and practices that were perceived as heretical by other board members. I was put under severe pressure through individual meetings, phone calls, emails and then being hauled up before key board members and basically kicked off. It was dressed up as something else, to 'finesse it'. The second time was over the [REDACTED] celebrations. In addition to appalling lead artist behaviour (as well as not fulfilling the contract as they were paid to, there was extensive bullying), there was a serious conflict of interest at a senior level, which continued when that person moved to the funder, stayed on the lead arts organisation board and then interfered directly with the project. I reported on this to ACE and was told there was nothing to see. The lead artist and person now working with a funder have ensured I have not had any local work since. This happens at a micro level, however; I was working with a colleague of colour this year, and when she was treated differently from me, and I wanted to address it, I was begged not to, as it 'would make it worse'. Makes me very angry that influence is abused in this way. Personally, I don't understand why we are all so cowardly, there are so many stories and corroborations that we could actually effect some change, but our self-interest gets in the way. I have found that if someone decides to bad mouth me I have ALWAYS found other work, and usually with much better people and clients.

Made to feel that I was making a fuss or making a stand for some personal gain or other rather than a wider sector conversation.

Being told what to do against my better judgement mainly in terms of how I commission work, type of dancer I employ, my own creative ability. Bossy, manipulative Style of

language Pressure around definitions of cultural value (sector vs. people), arts for arts sake vs. the instrumentalisation of arts, high art vs. low art. Pressure around acknowledging the value of arts and culture to address local issues such as social divides, social inclusion, environment, gender equality, acceptance of diversity and plurality of voice, seen as a fluffy add on and not a core need or right. Pressure from community groups and the cultural sector that funders and politicians are not doing enough to provide support, but also a rejection of this support and system when it is offered, favouring individual and private funding.

The case described in the previous chapter. (documented by the Index on Censorship).

It's quite impossible to admit to supporting Brexit, or even to believing that both sides of the debate should be fairly represented. I have been criticised for suggesting that, as a publicly funded body, we should not describe Brexiteers as 'like Nazis'. I have been told to suppress statistically rigorous data that we ourselves commissioned that shows that Brexit has increased the UK's attractiveness to young people in other countries outside Europe. I regularly have written content that is supposed to be impartial censored for not being sufficiently pro-Remain.

Along with several colleagues I have to pretend to be a Remainer at work as my career would otherwise be under threat. An hysterical anti-Brexit atmosphere pervades the organisation and much of the sector, reminiscent of McCarthyism or the Stasi.

Just negativity if one does not follow the trend.

If you are been paid for a job, then I feel you have to please the client or organisation not

actuary yourself who is the artist. Something you know is wrong appears in your work to please others. Also not been left to get on with a job, but constantly hounded, then the person thinks they are an artist, when I would not dream of saying I am an accountant because I can add up.

It does go against the grain, of either getting paid or not, surviving or not?

A book and Q&A event with George Galloway and Ken Livingstone last year was subject to a concerted campaign from Manchester Jewish groups to try and get the event cancelled. I was called several times over a weekend and we were bombarded with emails and social media messages accusing us of supporting Anti-Semitism. The Chairman wanted to cancel the event with less than a week to go and it was only the fact that I pointed out that we could be sued for cancellation that he relented and allowed the event to take place. A similar, but less comprehensive campaign from LGBT campaigners lobbied for us to cancel a Germaine Greer book event – again, we ignored them; but this is becoming a regular feature of any event that is with someone who can be considered to have offended a section of society. With the increasing role of Live Nation and Clear Channel in the UK live arts environment, this policy of attacking venues has the potential to stymie free speech in the future.

Comments and accusations about income generated through specific projects. Accusations about empire building if we step outside of our place of origin – we are we working in this place, city, town etc. We are contributing to regeneration in a negative way and we are using artists as part of this process.

Much of this ends up in self-policing. The overt pressure has been to separate the 'personal' and the 'political' (as if feminism never happened). In other words, I'm entitled to my own views, just not to reflect these from an organisational position.



This entire comment was removed for legal reasons.

When speaking about issues with those who fund you, you cannot say what you fully want.

I have often had the 'you are putting us in a bad light' (speaking out against arms trade funding of projects or those with an obvious 'right wing' bias) or even 'can you leave the politics out?' even when there is no political content!

'You are showing yourself up' is often quoted being even subtly political can have right wing audiences in a lather.

It has and does vary so much it is difficult to delineate particulars. I don't use social media so that doesn't affect me but I have been pilloried in other circumstances and had pressure from local government and funders to change the tenor of a script or remove references etc. There is a difference between giving offence and taking offence (the latter seems easily done). Debate is essential and I am concerned about the poor level of public discourse. I can challenge, disagree, and defend my corner whilst still being polite and I have changed my mind when faced with a thoughtful well-structured argument expressed with a genuine desire to understand.

We have a lacklustre board who don't give a damn about their staff as long as the theatre looks good.

I have had a lot of eye rolling if I mention class. Trying to intersection class with race and sexual identity is difficult. There seems to be resistance to seeing big pictures, especially with funders and sponsors.

In my experience of local government museums and galleries, a very small amount of adverse public comment can lead to censorship, withdrawal of exhibits, unnecessary signage etc. when in fact the majority of visitors are not bothered and want to be



challenged, stimulated and inspired to think differently. There is a culture of inviting and then overreacting to complaints when in fact they represent a tiny proportion of views.

As per the previous comment.

Post-show discussions can be very intimidating – quite a few theatre companies I've seen in action do not have the skills or desire to handle members of the audience affected by what they have just seen. Friends and colleagues and social media can have a particular view of what is an approved topic or approach for me to make art about – an old white woman's views on sex and race, without finding out what I bring, based on extinct. I am coded 'left-wing' so I don't take as much risk as I might in a more stimulating, supportive arena but I live in a very, conservative rural area. Funders don't want to know how hard it is to work with marginalised groups to make share but do want to know too much detail about race, gender, sexuality etc... on funding bids.

You never know who's reading your posts on SM – and how they're going to react. the level of trolling out there has become completely unacceptable and generates an unhealthy climate of self censorship.

Being a father in the arts, there isn't the same understanding and support as there is currently for mothers. Working long, late, unsociable hours, short notice changes, or late issues schedules, all impact on parental responsibilities and it's often assumed that a father in the arts will have a partner at home looking after the kids or taking the slack. Also as a white man there is quite a lot of anti white, anti male aggression and presumption that I am broadly privileged and have a wealth of opportunity at

my doorstep. White working class men are some of the most challenged and ignored individuals in our society.

I am a long-term non-native resident; I've been told I don't have the right accent to talk about local issues, when advocating for the arts sector. As a representative of a couple of smaller arts organisations, I feel the pressure of necessity to speak out for unfunded groups. I often attend sectoral strategy meetings, to contribute to the ideas and development of larger cultural strategies. When these consultations result in no changes to funding structures – and indeed when these structures increasingly marginalize and exclude smaller organisations – I often feel my time and voice are not respected. It's indirect pressure to stay quiet, and a disincentive to engage in cultural sector advocacy.

Whilst programming work or developing projects some interference to bury any reference to equality and diversity.

You have to use the right kind of language and there are issues that I have found difficult to talk about, because I am aware of those people watching what you say.

Abusive comments on social media and directly to me in person.

See previous reply.

It's rarely explicit, often it's just there, a feeling that to disagree or challenge isn't the done thing, so you adapt and don't even think of it as pressure, it's just how things are done and how you behave and respond to situations.

ditto on previous page... Schools, Colleges, standing up for the Arts and artistic non

academic young people.

I was given a quiet word about my social media feed. It was a fair warning by a concerned line manager but it was a shaming experience. He said: “No one cares until someone cares”

I was lobbying for more support for an arts venue and was told that I had to remain neutral on the subject and was ordered to meet a manager where I had a verbal warning and was asked to go on retraining It gives you a negative reputation. The sector is tiny and everyone is connected. Being labelled as a troublemaker or outspoken will only negatively affect you in the long run.

Lack of confidence in systems and protection from negative outcomes mean I haven't raised issues of bullying. I'm leaving my organisation instead. Colleagues regularly shut down opinions that don't match the party line, even in seemingly casual situations.

Pained looks for saying something that has been interpreted as 'out of turn' which I would suggest shows a lack of lateral thought on their part and a lack of understanding that may be due to age differences. I tend now to let the younger colleagues speak the jargon and pick up what is acceptable at that/their level.

Not being believed about the wider issues regarding funding at board meetings and grants were not coming into an organisation, despite being a professional fundraiser Not feeling that I could stand up to male trustees as a woman at board meetings when voices were being raised.



Pressure about programming for a music festival from an influential funder to change what was being performed.

See previous.

In one job as a freelancer – I was aware that the director/

producer was in the least micromanaging and more likely bullying myself and others. I felt undermined and disempowered and could see the same in others, I felt strongly about it but not strong, so I wrote an email and received a curt reply implying I was weak to email and that I was talking nonsense. I went to other colleagues and everyone freelance was of the opinion to try and keep the peace as we all wanted to keep our jobs.

I write a lot about ethics in fundraising and sometimes get pressure from lobbying groups when expressing the opinion that we need to ensure that the arts remain fundable and that we don't ostracise key funders.

I have felt pressurised to get on board with positive discrimination, to not question it and to not put forward the view that in any levelling process one specific demographic will inevitably loose out and be blocked from access at some point. I have been sniped at in diversity training meeting by asking if there tends to be more conflict within diverse groups – asking because in my experience I am often different to my group being from a lower socio-economic background, more well off than some peers at school but significantly less well off than my peers at Art College and in the arts institution that I work p/t in (so never fitting in), and have often been subjected to hostility and bullying throughout my life. I was wondering if it was because I was different as I have always suspected, I also look European, Middle Eastern and could pass for mixed-race Asian and growing up outside of London this was an issue – I have no heritage that I know of and am technically White British. The team (and my director) seemed to feel that I was holding an anti-diversity view, rather than trying to understand my own experience.

Colleagues asking if my thoughts/views are appropriate for the type of museum we are.

Bad management.

I have been told that I has 'gone native' in my advocacy of the independent arts sector. I





have also been told to apologise for questioning cuts to an arts teaching institution on social media.

Have an idea, develop it, aim to reach a group of segment then have the idea dismantled because it's too tradition, not diverse enough etc? In a time of limited resources we should aim for the greatest return on expenditure. Engaging with niche audiences is fine but there has to be balance and currently the sector cannot see this.

I have tried to raise concerns about the context in which colleagues (both within and without the organisation) are working but have been "Sent to Coventry" and had conversations simply shut down if entering into territory that questions the status quo.

I used to have a notable profile as an arts commentator writing for national and international publications about arts policy and related political issues. In the current climate, I feel unable to put forth ANY complex argument because of the trend towards an overly simplistic orthodoxy that does not allow for grey areas. As I said above, in particular: I often feel pressured to self censor for fear of being 'cancelled' or bullied for not conforming to the orthodoxy. I am a biological female who has experienced misogynist bullying from trans colleagues on more than one occasion. In both cases, I was aggressively bullied and physically intimidated by trans women in a way that I would normally associate with misogynist male behaviour. However, because these people were trans women, it was difficult for me to get support for combating the behaviour that called it out as what it was – misogyny because of the fear of reprisal from trans activists. Gender is not just a physical thing but is constructed from the way we have been socialised from childhood. I think there needs to be a genuine and positive discussion about how to

manage the needs of both trans and biological female people in female only and shared spaces.

Pressure surrounding comments regarding funding. Grass root organisations in the rural sector never get a large slice of the pie when it comes to funding. The East of England has a delicately balanced system with large organisations such as Snape Maltings receiving a lot of money from the Arts Council in comparison to others who are desperately in need... just saying.

There's a reluctance to acknowledge 'failure' and also to robustly evaluate work. I've been criticised for flagging things that have not gone to plan. There's such pressure to claim everything as a success which is naïve at best and dishonest at a fundamental level.

The expression of an opinion or view is it simply challenged but attacked – in a personal way rather than in a way intended to explore positions positively.

Preparing a conference to explore issues around consent a company of which I am a director has received really horrible, unsubstantiated criticism, including sarcasm about the funding received and a personal attack from people who have little or no knowledge of the what the company does.

Threat of disciplinary action, working in public sector.

Love of family members.

To not upset funders (particularly the Arts Council) by publicly criticising their actions. It seems that if you do this you are branded as a 'traitor' and giving support and fuel to their



detractors.

The mono argument from well meaning activists. History cannot be changed because it is now filtered differently.

Mainly general pressure from producers fearing for ticket sales.

In the early days of the National Lottery I was told that if I ever made public the dubious circumstances that led to a major grant being awarded, "I would be finished in the arts". I said on a panel in 2017 that arts funding and state support for the creative industries had failed to diversify – particularly in terms of class – either the audience or the workforce, and that in the arts in particular things were worse than they were 30+ years ago. A couple of National Campaign for the Arts type people told me that I "shouldn't be allowed to say stuff like that" (!) and an ACE director told me my comments were "very unhelpful at this difficult time".

Fear of views being associated with the wider organisation.

I was reprimanded by a colleague for using a portrait of a white man as the opening artwork for a group exhibition. Although I do support affirmative action and recognise unconditional bias, I felt judged by my curatorial decision and was not allowed to express any opposition to the portrait being switched over to a BAME one.

School managers who will not tolerate alternate agendas which support rather than curtail the arts in England.



I have had Holy Kitch! for some time it was way more than Mexican rather taken as a whole it was an extremely quirky and underground gallery and shop run by two artists. The abuse was relentless as we were obviously non mainstream, we were accused of everything. Then the major gallery in Sydney put on a

██████████ exhibition which drew a lot of people thanks to us yet omitted to invite us or buy even one Mexican ware from us. They bought some wares from a supplier we used at times and even they copied what we bought in Mexico it was mad. Everybody copied us. We brought out linen cushions I said how it was better for the environment then everybody brought them out on Ebay very similar. China watched everything we did so we did not put prints on-line. I am quite unusual as I am an artist. When I went to the ██████████ about a Doctorate they were total bullies, I thought they must be kidding but maybe this is a brand new world I am unaware of I am trying to place a complaint but like a recent court case it only costs me money and the other person gets away with bullying. My art text and drawings were criticised in a court battle over the welfare of my ex business partners child my art work was said to show that I was a nasty and cruel person, the judge did not like me I think for my name and temperament so I had a restraining order placed on me I had done nothing. I went to a counsellor about it she said it is distressing you so much forget about it. I had a well known barrister harass me, once again I am kind of different still nothing I could do about it. Now everybody must be celebrating as so many took umbrage at what we sold as if we were drug dealers. I was almost homeless the harassment never ceases, I now make little money. I am trying to gain entry back to uni but I am not Irish catholic which a large part of art world is here so I am no good at that kind of sentimentality it is just not me. The university of ██████████ refuses to even answer my emails it is maddening. It is so elitist here it beggars belief.

Told by government representative that I was not to speak publicly about funding matters.

I think there are sometimes untrained board members who haven't fully understood complex issues within the arts world. I've certainly observed it on social media – often from people outside of the arts ("what are they all about then?" style of complaints).



Social media is something of a bear pit – when someone can respond to your art with a rape or death threat (of which I've had both – from a protest piece, what I'd consider to be pretty gentle feminist activist art) then it certainly makes you think twice about what you might reveal or talk or complain about on a public forum. I think often you feel you just need to get on with bad working practices, or self solve them because you want the work – it is a precarious thing to be an artist, even when you're respected. I have worked in places and on big projects which looked great for my career, which have been pretty disastrously run, and I've not complained about because for my career I made the decision that it was better to grin and bear the bullying rather than confront it. This has meant that the same things are probably happening to other people.

Given on previous page.

I was bullied at work. In a toxic environment where everyone watches their own back and won't stand up – I had to leave. These were people campaigning for LGBT+rights, Palestine etc but telling them there is a disconnect between what they practise and preach gets you nowhere. Me too will never root out the offenders as there are too many complicit in allowing bad behaviour or saying it's part and parcel of the industry.

I've have been advised by a high profile venue programmer to watch how I talk about certain things, that I have burnt bridges by standing up with integrity for what I believe in, I've been told that 'it's only dance in the end' so not to rock the boat. This is just some of what I have experienced.

As artists we have front line experience. As experts we have expert knowledge which often

outweighs the knowledge of the funders. We see projects and funding guidelines being dreamed up by generals (and academic theoreticians) who sit in comfortable seats far behind the frontline. These projects are often doomed to failure, (and frequently have re-invented wheels attached which won't and can never work – often because we know that in fact what are needed are ships....!). If we make suggestions, no matter how tactfully, offensive defensive moves are made. Artists show truth to power, in order to hold power to account. UK Funders and asset managers have become an arrogant power that lacks humility before artists. They should be serving us, not we them. We are the immediate servants of the public.

Social media's inherent polarisation tendency makes it hard to speak against the tide of one's peers' opinions or messages of arts policy. Whereas (for example) a few years back Arts Council officers used to engage in a useful dialogic way on social media they seem to have no opinion other than holding the 'party line'. Outsiders to the coterie of decision-makers are in effect discouraged from expressing alternative opinions (except with the equivalent of a loud hailer) so the pressure is implicit rather than explicit.

Pressure from campaigning groups to have access to facilities and venue with little understanding that there is a cost attached. Pressure from Board Members and some colleagues regarding the type of programmers put on as being too specialized, left wing or not popular. Local government wanting programmes to reflect their policies but not question them. NO room for debate.

At an open meeting i asked a speaker for their view on an ACE policy. An ACE Officer said she felt under attack. The question wasn't directed at her. I hadn't even realised any ACE

staff were there. And i doubt she personally wrote the policy in question!

I've worked with directors that like to have control over what you say about past projects of theirs. This makes it extremely difficult to communicate your views about past projects with them without them dictating whether to edit or delete your previous posts about them.

I have expressed views previously on positive discrimination when women are offered jobs in a discriminatory way against men and a person's right to follow whichever religion they choose.

More self censorship for views/concerns around issues which do not directly impact my role but concern that my views will be held against me if others in the industry wanted them to be.

When voicing an opinion that is a personal experience followed by discussions and other people's opinions. I have felt intimidated and my input which was placed to support twisted to a negative. This may be my interpretation within wording and industry language but it still impacts on people's expression.

Occasionally being told that I couldn't speak out about contracts being terminated outside of contract terms, and would be trolled on social media if I went public. Board members asking me to hold back on stuff when we should have spoken out. Sponsors or individual givers placing undue pressure to use their services...



When applying for funding, it is always imperative to express particular values and attitudes. A culture of conformity and self-censorship has become the norm in fundraising. Debate around certain issues, particularly around identity has become fraught with difficulty Expressing a 'leave' position on Brexit is regarded as

completely unacceptable in the arts world – which reflects how disconnected the sector has become from ordinary people.

Advice to remain silent on matters, basically, so as not to develop a reputation for being difficult and to think carefully in future before submitting information to DCMS Select Committee Enquiries that might be seen as critical of (specifically) ACE.

A reluctance or resistance to change has led me to “keep quiet” in instances where I believe I could have spoke out and be heard. Certain leaders don't want to hear alternative views and actively discourage it unless there's a full “case” behind your views or experiences. I tend not to voice my opinion on social media for fear of judgements, comments by others (people in and out of the sector) and to self protect in the case that future employers might see posts/pictures and choose not to employ me. Negative impact all round!

In my network, people including myself who have criticised work – even just to say, it's not something they've enjoyed – have been ostracised both publicly and privately. I briefly worked for a national reviewing organisation and was asked to rewrite a review of a show that was on at a regional theatre to raise it from a 3 star show to a 5 star show. The rationale was that they didn't want to upset the theatre. I challenged this as lacking integrity and surely doing the organisation and theatre's reputation more harm than good.

Threatening and bullying behaviour from the CEO and board at ██████████ City Council. They conducted illegal redundancy process and tried to hide and not investigate a sexism case towards a colleague. The chair of the board sent a report to the victim saying that “she should have felt flattered”. They also threatened and lied regarding a police investigation, saying the staff they were making redundant had deleted programming emails, which the police confirmed was not a police matter. When staff approached ██████████ City Council ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ they refused to investigate or get involved. The board and staff changed legal documents



and lied to BECTU and Equity regularly during the 6 months legal battle. This case never went to court as after 6 months they finally agreed to pay redundancy. They offered a gagging order which I chose not to take but another colleague signed regarding the sexism case.

Everyone seems to feel free to share their opinions, comments, criticisms about what we do institutionally or what I do as the Director of an art museum / gallery personally. This ranges from the type of car I drive, where I live or should live, what I post on my own social media (which is now limited to generic information on the arts, galleries I visit and the occasional cute photo of my dog – but never anything more personal), who I associate with and what I say or don't say to the media. I often feel like I am constantly being policed. I never share specific political views at the risk of offending sponsors or government agencies that may support us.

Over the course of my career I think the most pressure comes from board members, followed by community members who don't really support the organization or even attend but feel entitled to criticize and complain about what they like and don't like, or what we / I do or don't do.

In April 2019, when I was working for an Arts Council funded symphony orchestra, I was told to remove a personal tweet in which I criticised a lack of diversity in the recently announced BBC Proms season. My employer told me that I would face disciplinary action if I did not comply, despite the fact that my twitter profile contained no information that would link me to my employer – not even my full name. I felt that this grossly disproportionate action by my employer was down to the fact that they themselves lacked

diversity, and therefore felt implicated in my criticism. They showed that they would rather punish me – a passionate, dedicated and hardworking member of staff – than make meaningful changes that could improve diversity.

Posting to follow up on the recent Sackler conversation with the National and if we should be supportive or not about this campaign.

Derogative comment, verbal abuse, name calling, and threats made through comments and private messages online. being yelled at and threatened in public places due to my public association with a local high profile art project.

Sometimes it is simply things like “Ooooh, you shouldn't have said that” or “should you be talking like that?” (as an employee of the funding government. Definitely pressure from my employer to toe the party line. Public service is difficult because I feel I work for the public and for my sector as well as my employer. Part of my job is community development and advocacy, but my organisation doesn't always agree. Several times I have been aware that my organisation and non-profit organisations have been robbed by their own employees, but there is a big hush for fear of negative publicity. recently my organisation was criticised for having inadequate accessibility to the building for people with disabilities. There was a mildly critical newspaper article outlining the problem and as a staff member I was told not to speak of it, that it would be handled by communications team. Fine, that is appropriate, but they dragged their feet and made the problem worse. Staff were happy because these things did need to be addressed and the delays on communication about it and on solving the problems made things worse. The inability to accept responsibility and address problems is stifling and trouble-causing.

As explained in question 3, it has been made very clear to staff across the organisation I work for that we would face disciplinary procedures if we expressed ourselves on Brexit – including European nationals whose right to work in the institution might be affected in the coming months. Likewise, it is clear to everyone that we cannot be seen as critical of the government’s actions and policies. Staff were also told they could not join Extinction Rebellion protests.

Too many to mention.

It was about neutral casting and she dismissed my view and moved on, while everyone else had their views discussed.

Simply refusing to speak, adopting bullying tactics behind the scenes to try and get their way. Using positions of power eg on ACE regional Council to undermine organisations that questioned decisions or put forward alternative options.

I’ve generally felt pressure to create the right message so as not to upset potential funders or partners.

Funders especially bring their own set of requirements, which artists must then meet if they don’t want to be excluded from funding opportunities.

Published studies of Arts Council patterns of expenditure and policy failure that they disliked resulted in public slagging off of the researchers by senior staff and Council members, negative press briefings and attempts to influence a Parliamentary Inquiry and compliant Ministers to their own advantage. At a silly micro-level it has also meant that if you raise your head above the parapet, the chances of ever having your name put on a tender list for ACE funded contact work are zero. At an even sillier level the pressure (and misinformation) is



spread through weak and co-dependent networks such as ‘What Next?’ which is FAR too close to, and dependent upon, ACE. I can also even quote examples of academics who are supposedly free to speak out and publish neutrally who pull their punches (or fail to speak out altogether) as a result of themselves being on ACE Boards, or working to Committees (and ‘Commissions’ – ha, ha) that are packed with vested interests which skews and/or distorts results of research.

I have previously spoken on social media about an organisation who was giving jobs away, without a recruitment process in their cafe. I then received an email from the director of the organisation explaining why there was no recruitment process. Which still wasn’t justified. But also, given that I didn’t name the organisation, it was clearly to intimidate me without and proof I was talking about said organisation. When I have brought up nepotism and lack of process around commissions, associate artist programmes and jobs in a room full of my peers I have been told I can’t tell people who to work with. The silencing can take many forms, but a manipulative way of silencing can be by saying ‘you seem stand offish’, or ‘to change things we have to make them comfortable’ (them being gatekeepers), or being out right kept out of important conversations, people trying to isolate my voice or isolate my organisation. When I have experienced racism or whitewashing I have been told ‘I’m sure they didn’t mean it like that’ or that I ‘need to stop seeing everything through a race lens). It’s really very hard to pin point because it comes in many different shapes and sizes, which is what makes the silencing more difficult to deal with.

To be outspoken or open to express opinions or to make a valid point. People from some community are outspoken and they get away with it however for other it is about diversity or racist if challenged!

I was told in uncertain terms that my organisation will never get access to a Council owned





community space because of opposing political views. Wearing a different hat I was also winning a different case on a housing estate management budget.

I was verbally attacked and abused by someone who was treating an anti-Israel comment I had made as an antisemitic one. Our mutual friend was upset and embarrassed by this – she also (as a result) received a tirade of abuse accusing her of being antisemitic.

Pressure to change the type of work I make.

When I raised awareness of a CEO illegally making redundancies and using threatening and sexist tactics, to [REDACTED] City Council who [REDACTED], they didn't even investigate when both BECTU and Equity were heavily involved. Myself and a colleague were threatened with a phoney police investigation into deleted emails. The main funder ignored my emails and subsequently refused me funds for work that was high on their agenda. After a 6 month case with the unions he finally agreed to redundancy money and make one colleague sign a gagging order. This case got hushed up. For the staff involved they were bullied by the board and CEO to protect their own misgivings and illegal redundancy processes aimed at women. This case was clearly sexism and #Me Too with strong evidence.

I engaged once with what I now understand to be trolling on twitter by an artist that had questions about what I was doing – but rather than ask me made a snidey social media comment. My engagement with responding provoked an onslaught of ugly comments. I have never done this again. I limit my social media to retweeting some types of opinion and supporting other artists work or distributing opportunities.

After reporting Spanish repression in Catalonia, I has never been commissioned again by any theatre.

Pressure to make art about ethnicity Intimidation about my low income status, I could not afford £20 to be featured in a graduation booklet that was not compulsory, the lecturer made the whole class vote if I should be allowed in the booklet or not right in front of me, they all voted no. I was left out of it. A lecturer made comments about me being 'from Jamaica or some place like that' when I was born in the UK and my father is African American and native American. My local community where I grew up was predominantly working class and was told I lived in a dreamworld often just for wanting to be an artist. Have been singled out for negative criticism when I felt it was unjustified, threatened with failure at uni when my marks were in line with a 1st because I challenged a lecturer about something in a critique in a reasonable and non-confrontational way. I've been belittled, insulted, patronised and ostracised on numerous occasions. I've also been denied prizes, my prize being given to other students that I beat in the competition.

Usually when I share opinions about the importance of theatre or performing arts or our work with young people we get some negative comments that this is causing young Palestinians to be distracted from more important issues like resisting the Israeli Occupation. Sometimes if events include male and female artists in some areas we get criticized for performing in public in some areas. If we produce something about how Palestinians resist the Israeli Occupation sometimes we are criticized by our funders.

I don't have the emotional resource to go into this.



Relating to funding, perhaps often people not understanding the financial constraints surrounding creative work. People suggesting it is fine to pay people poorly, suggesting greed when talking about receive public funding to make work, how better this money could be spent, artists being lazy and not wanting to work at being a business etc...

I find it difficult to talk freely on issues pertinent to disabled artists as particularly online even the simplest statement can attract 'trolls' – this has also been the case around discussions pertinent to the LGBT plus community.

Often it's policed organisational messaging that's had the most impact – the fear of challenge both internally and externally. This stops interrogation, reflection or growth.

I am posting from Belfast – where anything is possible regarding comment.

European Capital of Culture campaigning. Local councillors (with a pro Brexit stance) were putting pressure on the council team leading the bidding to pull out. We continued to put out messages of support but they had to be very carefully crafted to avoid trolling and we offered advice to our network members to keep themselves safe as we anticipated negative comments.

As a casting director there is great scrutiny on any wording I use for breakdowns. These are heavily policed on social media – they will be tweeted/retweeted and subject to intense lobbying if there is any infringement from what is deemed acceptable by vocal lobbying groups.



Colleagues are often wary of rocking the boat, particularly if nothing 'too bad' has happened to them. And many employers want to work only with people who don't cause any type of friction or challenge. In the classical music industry there are lots of old white men in charge (surprise surprise), many of whom

have very problematic views of how much power they should be allowed to have, and how little their freelance 'employees' have, so understandably are generally not keen on having these conversations.

Our professional and company Twitter has been targeted by trolls on numerous occasions.

Usually angry white men or older women who believe our policies around positive discrimination and positive action are part of a conspiracy against them. Great Replacement Theory in action.

I cannot criticise funders and their methods in front of my senior colleagues. Although I am employed in development, and have the experience and insights previously described, senior colleagues are, perhaps understandably, afraid to take up any of my concerns with senior contacts at funding bodies. In addition, when once working freelance as a development consultant for a national/international cultural developmental consultancy based in central London, I was discouraged from discussing the risks of 'instrumentalism'. Those who commissioned my work suggested that this was not an avenue worth pursuing. Presumably, it is an avenue that would not draw success for funding consultancies.

I have found that when certain executives don't agree with an opinion or an experience that they will discount and belittle it. Should note though that this is not my experience of everybody at this level.

General fears lasting over a long time. I'm no longer in the sort of employed sector but applying for funding especially to ACE carries all sorts of threats.

I have been criticised for doing important work on the basis of my race, gender and age. I have been told that I should not do what I am doing because of who I am. This is fascism.

I spoke up against bullying in theatre, in particular from those who have enjoyed long careers in theatre. I was personally being bullied and reported this to my manager and



HR. No action was taken and my manager said that I was imagining the situation and had brought it on myself. I had no option but to speak out and stand up against this bullying, which prompted others to speak out. I quickly found myself ostracized and without a job, and my name defamed through the performing arts sector. Two years later I am still struggling to rebuild my career. Further to this, I was forced to delete my social media accounts as certain individuals were using this against me; those who I did not follow nor did they follow me. All I was posting was my support for the #metoo movement and mental health, as well as random boring personal stuff.

Apparently to do so was a form of harassment on my part. Even though I did not direct my posts to any individual or company. I asked for proof that what I was posting was harassment; I was told this was confidential information.

See answer to Q2.

The inability to be able to tell an organization that they are manipulating you or ignoring you on purpose and that there is no procedure to hold them to account. Institutional racism is prevalent within the arts and there is still no procedural or other mechanism to hold institutions to account. Therefore any highlighting of this somehow becomes an affront rather than what it is, a crime.

Funders use their powers and the leverage this has to demand certain modes of behaviour and communication which is based on some middle class, bourgeoisie mode of how to conduct yourself. The rules are made up by white middle class, militant liberals who only pay lip service to diversity by using tick boxes and obscure codes of behaviour censoring

any form of normal and open communication. Colleagues then perpetuate this bizarre behaviour and think they're been inclusive or increasing access to activities by conforming to this ridiculous notion of censored equality!

In raising certain points regarding the state of the sector and having provided clear evidence for this point of view, the position I have stated has been commented on as being 'mendacious' by certain leading policy makers.

I was asked for 'the Irish angle' on a film about African music!

As well as the difficulties in flagging up bad practice from (particularly) the arts council, we are a theatre company that works very widely with our local community, many of whom have political views that differ quite widely from the main people who run our organisation. This does lead to some curbing of political views because of fear of offending both audiences, participants and families of participants. But maybe that's about sensitivity to a local political climate, not so much intimidation.

Speaking on a radio programme panel at the time Arts Lottery was introduced, i said that i did not believe and undertook to monitor whether core funding would not be replaced in some cases by Lottery funding which the Arts Council of NI was promoting as 'additional funding.' The ACNI director and the director of Lottery both sharply repudiated this – which came about in a far shorter period than i had reckoned. I was offered by ACNI – and took – a couple of very challenging could-have-been end of career jobs after that, and survived intact, despite feeling was on the edge of a cliff someone would like to push me over. I don't succumb to bullying by Board members, etc. That relationship depends on mutual

respect and if someone doesn't have it, then it needs to be put in place. My Chair – of a venue – once described me as 'having a somewhat military style of management'. I just smiled and it was the Vice Chair who asked him, sharply, to withdraw those words. When tangling with the press over a thorny subject (the theme of a production my company was touring) and seeing a totally false but sensational article in a national newspaper, I contacted the Press Council and said I would take action unless and until there was a printed apology which I could then show funders, receiving venues etc. We got the apology.

I've had work 'depublished' after a campaign by transgender activists. The publisher, a massive corporate with an unparalleled heritage, immediately folded to the demands of a tiny minority of (I believe homophobic) social media activists, including another writer for the same publication.

To long to go into. Save to say I've campaigned against for having opinions which are entirely mainstream outside of the arts sector.

I've been openly and publicly critical for years and while most of my colleagues have been supportive, there are certain people who clearly don't like it and don't like me for saying it. It's pretty obvious I'll never work in any place where these people also work. This has also extended to being ignored or blanked in face to face situations.

I made a show about the use of zero hour contracts and employment law.

All references to real places and people were redacted but someone significant came up to me and told me to, "Be careful"... I know it is possible to say the words, "Be careful" in a variety of ways. There are some ways to say it which are nice and there are some ways to say it that are not nice. I know what was meant when they said it to me.



Certain subjects are now borderline off limit. While some individuals have been smeared by what are groundless accusations which would be easily be seen as libel, these attacks have meant that issue which concern many have become unbroachable, for fear of being similarly attacked. The controversies around trans rights and the GRA is a particularly serious example. In my own experience, I have lost freelance writing work for my public support for the Leave campaign.

See answer to previous question. I received an email from University of the Arts with the following statement contained: "Colleagues have brought to my attention a social media controversy over LGBT-phobic language you appear to have used online. I am concerned as we are an equal opportunities employer and must stand by our LGBT students and staff. Just to be clear, your political stance is not the question, it's the use of language which is the cause of concern." The social media comment I made was NOT aimed at any UAL students or staff, the academic I commented on lectures at Goldsmiths College, UCL. Brighton Lighthouse gave the following reasons for cancelling the public talk I was due to have at a post-show discussion with an artist: "Earlier today, we were alerted to a recent comment you made on Twitter refers to a trans activist in a derogatory manner. This comment directly opposes our organisational values and code of conduct, as well as our equal opportunities and bullying & harassment policies. Lighthouse is committed to providing a happy and supportive environment for our staff and audiences. Volunteers and contributors to our programme and all other activities are also expected to share this commitment. For that reason, we are not able to have you lead the conversation tomorrow evening with [artist] at a public facing event. This decision has not been taken lightly. If you wish to discuss anything in more detail, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me directly." Again, my only social media comment that was deemed "offensive" was not directed at any staff, volunteer or artists employed or connected with Brighton Lighthouse. These cancellations, and loss of earnings highlights a 21st century problem. Who controls



what I can say on my personal social media platform? Why are art institutions so hesitant to defend freedom of speech. In what way does a public remark, made in response to an incident of public concern, become harmful to others? The growing censorship and policing of language and expression, whether one agrees with what is said or not, is a matter of greater concern for art and free expression. Lenny Bruce would be cancelled and barred, not by the government or state authorities but by pressure from fellow creatives.

**Q7 Please give more details of the circumstances around this settlement agreement.**

I was not offered an actual cash payment but was told that my project ( I am a consultant ) would be cancelled, or my consultancy would be terminated.

The organisations has bullied me to keep my silence by threatening me with legal action. With no basis. Basically wanted me to cut my ties with the sector. Bullying me to almost have no career left!

It was at a University where I worked in the School of Drama. I had to sign that I would not discuss 11 employment acts [that had been broken in their treatment of me] for seven years unless called as a legal witness. My partner also had to sign this.

The agreement, which I refused to sign, referred to my questioning of unprofessional behaviour of a board member who was favouring his contacts, unfairly, I believed, I questioned the behaviour and was asked to agree to documents and minutes of meetings or be sacked (which would mean I could no longer be a director of any business in future; the terms of my trusteeship were tied to being a company director. I had agreed to be responsible for the actions of the organisation for the sum of £1 when I joined the board) being sacked would make me ineligible for future roles as a trustee anywhere else, or to sit on any board of directors – this was a form of bullying – I could have fought the case but I felt it would be detrimental to the arts organisation, which was going through a difficult period and struggling for survival. (I was going to leave the board to deal with a family illness anyway so resigning was a pragmatic decision in my case, even though it goes

against the grain to let this behaviour go unchallenged).

As a result of my non renewal, I was given a non-compete document to sign (I was not allowed to create a similar institution to the one I was leaving for a year) and gagged( no mention of the termination agreement or its contents was allowed) by the President of the board. The media was intelligent enough to understand what had happened and the headline wrote; Artistic Director arrives, Executive Director leaves. That said it all. It should be noted that this all happened after two of the most successful seasons, financially and artistically, in the organisation's history. The board had their eye on a target and come hell or high water they would have it. They did and then hell and high water came.

I have been associated with more than one settlement agreement which included a gagging provision. In several cases this has deprived me or my organisation of the opportunity to defend ourselves publicly against allegations which were false and self-serving. In more than one case my arts organisation has been forced to pay people to go away because this was preferable to wasting precious time and resources in defending vexatious claims. Again, I have come to see this as an unpleasant but inevitable price of operating in the arts sector, where people will sometimes do and say anything to get their hands on very limited resources. Fortunately it is usually pretty small-scale stuff, involving a few hundred or a few thousand pounds. However, in at least one case I experienced, it represented a malicious attempt to destroy my organisation.



I have been offered money to keep quiet about corrupt practices in arts funding at the EU level.

It happens all the time.

All I can say is it was to do with my previous job.

Previously agreed payment was threatened to be withheld. It

is very upsetting because my silence can be bought at a frighteningly low sum due to poverty and fear of ostracism

As a sessional artist I was acting as 'manager' of the project I was working at, it actually gave me more freedom to be honest. but unbeknown to me this was deemed a breach of their contract, I was asked to take compensation if I said nothing or made a claim against them. I refused and was asked to leave. I made a claim and did actually get compensation. They have since changed their policies and procedures so I did something positive for anyone following me I guess.

Having blown the whistle to top management about bullying going on around me (mostly male bosses bullying their female subordinates), I was paid off and invited to leave the organisation.

I was being bullied and wanted the leave the organisation.

A company took money from me to produce some touring work but dropped my project without doing the work and kept the money. On challenging this they suggested I take legal action and not having the time, energy, resources or confidence to take on the fight through the courts, I settled for a return of 'part' of the fee on the understanding that it would stay between us. I lost about £500.

To avoid dealing with bullying in the work place.

Part of a redundancy package when the redundancy wasn't wholly legal.

I was made redundant and the redundancy pay was dependent on signing a non-disclosure agreement – I knew about a lot of corrupt practices in the organisation but couldn't say anything about the mismanagement.

Sexual harassment. Of which I was ill-advised by then HR Manager 'didn't count' as it was





outside the office. I fought a corner, confronted the individual concerned, set a grievance up against the HR Manager who advised (and essentially tried to brush under the carpet), and was given a period of unpaid leave reimbursed for the challenges I'd experienced as a result of the incident.

... and try and do so without breaking the agreement.... I worked for a publicly-funded arts organisation in a senior position. After about seven – eight years' service, which I understood that I had carried out well, and with no criticism of my work being manifest, I was informed that the board had 'lost confidence in me' and I was invited to resign in exchange for a financial settlement. I was required to sign a document that stated that I would not divulge the existence of the settlement, nor would I refer to its contents. I understand that similar agreements were made with other members of staff from time-to-time.

I have not been offered one, but have been involved in offering one – I was the middle manager required to sort out a situation and ensure the settlement was signed and relations managed in such a way that nothing would become public. The situation involved bullying of production staff and stage management by an established theatre director. I was extremely uncomfortable with my part in this, but felt unable to voice my concerns fully for fear of losing my job and having my reputation damaged in what is at the end of the day a very small industry where it feels like everyone with power is connected. With a few years hindsight I wish I had spoken up more forcefully at the time and had found the confidence and support to act in line with my values.

This was a form of redundancy, and not specifically to do with speaking out, but they

didn't want me to discuss the terms.

constructive dismissal circumstances going public

That was around a bank guarantee on a shop. I had renewed the lease whilst in Mexico so did not notice the bank had omitted to withdraw extra money from my account for the newly raised bond amount with the new lease and higher rent. What they sneakily did and are allowed to do in very fine print was to transfer money from another bank guarantee I held with the second gallery. I only found that out when I had to close that one down as the money was not there, well only a smidgen. I said why did they do that and they said because they could but it is not usual practice. I desperately needed the money from that bond for new premises. They conceded to half the amount if I did not complain further. They also copied indigenous to Mexico beadwork on their teller machines for Mardi Gras. They looked good but they would never have thought about it had they not seen our beaded skulls and animals. It is [REDACTED]. I think a born again Christian may have taken umbrage at our store who worked at the bank is one mad guess. I do not know these are such grey areas it looks normal on the surface. I do know the director of the bank at the time was [REDACTED] and he is now [REDACTED]. I copied him on some of my emails which were over the top but I was scared to see my income go down the drain I am now on a pension it is shocking. I suffer from bi-polar which here makes you a charity case or "special needs" so best to not tell anyone or your art will be seen as art by the disabled like it is the last thing here you would tell to anybody you are at risk of being put in a rubber room for life!! I am kind of extreme in words but not in actions. I also lent the barrister some money he never returned it I can be gullible as I am an artist. The issue with



the academy is ongoing I cannot take it any longer people were readily shocked by our store as we were not [REDACTED] business owners.

I can't.

This is ticked because artists I advise have had this. I have also found (but advised artists to strike out) NDA clauses in some contracts to artists from NPOs which is extraordinary in a public funding context.

a "restructure" around termination of contract as my views did not accord with those of the Board.

I was offered a gagging order regarding a colleagues sexual harassment case and a Boards illegal processes.

In connection with voluntary redundancy. Standard clause, not on controversial in my case  
As part of the ACE hostile take-over of the Regional Arts Boards in order to recentralise and control. It inevitably involved expensive legal conflict – resulting in a higher settlement that was originally offered: all you might say an unnecessary waste of public money.

For legal reasons I can't divulge this as the case is continuing.

I became the subject of a nasty mudslinging campaign run by landlords/leaseholders who didn't like soft value creation using creative projects for the benefit of local residents. After they used the local police to put pressure on me and threats to evict me and I threatened to involve the media a mediation process was put in place. It went on for 4 months but failed to produce any results other than me walking away because it was too stressful.

I can't.

The 'settlement agreement' I signed was in exchange for me



withdrawing a data subject access request.

NDA as a part of a voluntary redundancy agreement.

I was offered a gagging order by [REDACTED] regarding sexism, illegal redundancy processes and the board lying on a number of occasions during the process. I did not sign but moved on to better possibilities away from a toxic organisation.

I was subject to sexual harassment (one of around 16 women) at a university and involved in an HR investigation of this (arts department). I wasn't offered money, but it was made clear that if I wanted to keep my zero hours contract then I would have to not speak out. The person was given a golden handshake and moved on to another position.

It came with my "redundancy", which was really an unfair dismissal.

I was made redundant 18 months ago. I had to sign a contract agreeing never to discuss the terms, just to receive a fair notice period (not even a redundancy settlement). I believe I was made redundant for both my confidence and outspokenness, but also because I was (am) having fertility treatment. But by taking the "pay off" and signing the contract I'm not allowed to discuss this with anyone.

Relates to a long term zero hours contract in a formal music education setting.

A termination as executive director was accompanied by such an agreement.

This was 10 years ago. An organisation handled the management of me as a senior executive very, very badly indeed. They pushed me into a corner where myself and my senior colleagues were forced to look for work elsewhere. We all 3 (Exec Director, General Manager, Producer) left within a period of 3 months. The reasons were political and connected with competing factions in the city where the organisation was based. It was kind of tribal – hard to believe in the 21st century. I signed a non disclosure agreement



in exchange for a substantial payout on the basis of constructive dismissal. Shortly after all this, ACE asked the chair of the organisation's board to step down and they put in substantial support in recruiting a fresh board and supporting better governance practice. A shame they hadn't intervened before 3 good quality arts practitioners had lost their jobs though.

Confidential for three years.

I'm afraid I cannot discuss this, as I'm sure you will understand.

New in a role, I uncovered extremely lax standards of probity and quality assurance (verging on malpractice) and probable financial irregularity around partnership activities overseas. I brought it to the attention of my line manager, who was extremely concerned and confirmed he would investigate. A matter of days later a concerted campaign began against me, orchestrated by senior leaders, to dismantle my role and make my position untenable. I signed the NDA and took compensation as the only plausible way of moving on with some financial recompense, and the hope of keeping my reputation intact.

I was a senior civil servant and so this happened before being involved in the Arts sector. UK Universities often withhold severance packages and pensions until gagging orders are signed.

I'm not able to.

Told they would construct dismissal. Had to negotiate a settlement with company.

Denial of maternity rights and sex discrimination linked to maternity leave.

Constructive dismissal turned into 'redundancy' with severance pay and settlement agreement.

One organisation decided they didn't like me (and told me so) so paid me off to leave and not expose their bullying and inappropriate use of the budgets I was managing. Another organisation, also a charity, were also using money meant for a project for disadvantaged groups to fund their own artistic endeavours. I was the reporting Director on the project and was told to lie about it. I was paid a lump sum of 10k not to go to the charities commission.

I offered to resign, but instead was released from my contract by signing a gagging agreement as to why.

I would be in breach of that agreement if I were to detail circumstances but if the issues had become know by the sector at large, they would have significantly compromised the capacities of that organisation to remain operational.

I didn't accept the settlement agreement they offered and had my three days in court instead... which I won.

UAL agreed to honour the loss of earnings for a couple of activities I was contracted to deliver, however UCL cancelled my agreement to deliver the services as a mentor. The letter sent to me by mail made it clear that the content within the letter was private and confidential.

**Q9. Can you give examples of opinions that you think people working in the arts & cultural sector would be ill-advised to express publicly?**

There has been an ongoing public debate around the identification of an individual's heritage; social media, press and industry professionals got involved. The debate is ongoing to this day. The fact is that this person who self-identified in a certain way has been ostracised for this, despite going to such lengths as to reveal their DNA data – an act which took place through a national newspaper. I observed this story, wishing that individuals and peers had instead of denouncing them, had taken steps to try and understand this person's story. In this way I would have liked to have seen people essentially thinking before creating division and negativity online, where essentially, if they didn't agree with this person, their opinion was later proven to be factually incorrect. The lasting effects are division and negativity within the sector, towards this person, and anyone who agrees with them.

No but the way group or public meetings are run, and often led by statement from the front, it is usually clear what one's own views should be.

Being politically aligned to a party. Bias towards right or left wing politics. Religious beliefs.

Concern about the promotion and/or funding of BAME or gender specific artists on the grounds of ethnicity or gender above ability. Concern and opposition to funding settlements for "undeserving" organisations. Criticism of artists/companies favoured within the sector. Questioning the relevance and quality of highly funded artists/companies.

Non.

Anything negative about Trans rights, Brexit being a good thing,



Keeping the Tories in power, anything to do with patriarchal/white power structures being acceptable

That Government funding is insufficient. That venues etc always fund the same people and that some in power do actively block entry to or activity by people they don't like. That the arts are nowhere near as open as they pretend to be, there is a lot of hiding and backstabbing. That we treat freelancers of all kinds terribly and often seem to look down on "non-artistic roles" whether employed or freelance. That we're paying a lot of lip service to equality and equity and representation but nobody is prepared to do anything to actually make a change. That we need to introduce quotas for representation, we should have a minimum number of women, minorities, disabled people, working class people etc. In leadership and in all levels. That ADs should have to stand down after a set term, say 3 to 5 years.

Pro Brexit, pro austerity, pro Universal Credit, pro making tenants homeless, pro most things that make poorer people poorer or penalise marginalised groups.

Well I think Brexit is a good example. Most of the big institutions just stayed silent. I mean also the opposition party stayed silent for way too long... You know, the British Museum can't do anything about this because eventually it was the will of the majority of the people, but still one can have an opinion right? And who knows how many dinners and interests are shared between high up people and parties members... What else? Palestine Kurdistan, Poverty, Austerity, Cambridge Analytica, Freedom of speech.

Agreement with any right-of-centre political view or policy. A wish to engage with issues caused by differences between almost any kind of minority and the rest of the population

That funding is corrupt. Backhanders all over the place. Money is always given where it's always gone. Funders preserve the status quo. Inclusiveness is lip service.



Controversial sponsorship; strong views that are representative of and held by majority of the particular local community that the arts &/or cultural artist/agency works in and on behalf of, that might differ from the national sentiment; biased advocacy.

About the abuse of power in the arts sector that causes precarious jobs, even more strongly in the context of the global south.

Support for Brexit. The belief class trumps race in most urgent to tackle but this is tied to making racism a white working class problem, which is a useful mask for the truth Failure for funders to grasp how they perpetuate structural inequality Support for the Conservative party.

Many arts charities do not host political events because the guidelines say "An organisation will not be charitable if its purposes are political". Because of this many charitable organisations steer clear of politics in their programming, which is irresponsible and a shame as they could be a strong voice for many individuals in the arts as it IS allowed "...in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes" Not finding that fine line and being afraid of any backlash would be the right thing to do.

We should express our opinions and accept the consequences: The actress who was offered the leading role in *The Color Purple* at the Curve in Leicester expressed her opinion on homosexuality and was compelled to accept the consequences. She was wise to do so as justice was done.

Theology – religion Race Gender Social Class Access Transphobia Hate Speech  
Environmental climate emergency denial.

Opinions on ethics, environment, politics and government.

Opposing arts council's criteria for funding.

That some funded work is 'the emperors new clothes'. That the arts & cultural sector is dominated by middle class people with degrees, and biased in that direction That established/ funded artists and arts organisations – many of whom have got to where they are through who they know – refuse to acknowledge their dependency on funding, and foster a sense of entitlement That for all the left wing posturing, many arts organisations play lip service to equality of opportunity, and talent development.

That they voted for Brexit That they feel enough has been done for minorities That they are just ticking boxes for inclusion, but otherwise really do not care, nor agree with it as it is just that – ticking boxes That the arts sector is a business and that it is about money and therefore art that makes money gets funded, not necessarily what is artistic That the art sector has been hijacked to solve social problems that are created with the hostile environment and because politicians want to cover/throw off their guilt That arts is still essentially elitist.

Offensive comment derogatory comments about other organisations, funders and others.

Opinions about working contracts Political opinions.

Political affiliation Election referencing Social policy and refugees.

Racist, homophobic, misogynistic.

Expressing concerns about the extreme left & right wing views shared by many

professionals and members of the public.

Brexit Race Classism.

Expressing controversial opinion frequently depends on where you are within the organisation and what level of influence or control a person may have. This is such a wide area – in my case, my work tends to be accompanied by lots of approval when viewers assume it is about liberal, internationalist or socialist issues – the discourse tends to be around how terrible government is rather than looking at wider meaning, favouring the zeitgeist. As an artist this is tedious and lazy thinking. Rarely am I asked about meaning, that is fine by me but I would like to hear people exploring situations and influences rather than seeing approval of their peers by echoing their views.

Personal negative opinions about other individuals and organizations.

Support for racism and homophobia or anti immigration.

I regularly review theatre under a pseudonym as I may well want to work for one of these companies one day.

Political views. Religious ones...

????????? How long is a piece of string? That isn't one of them. OK so you apply for a project, one you and others are well suited too. Its given to a famous name not because its any better, they may even 'steal' ideas from your original proposal. Its given because of the publicity value. It gets bums on seats. It happens and it happened. You cant make too much noise for lots of reasons especially if you want to be dangled a tidbit in the future. So you keep quiet. The view that some arts projects (and some EU ones come to that) have displaced locals, changed the environment, often of the less well off. They can feel discarded and not part of



the new. Criticise at your peril because you may want to get into that area in the future. It does not go down well. That funding is often wasted on poorly thought out projects but success criteria being often self-set produces successful results by definition. That big schemes are over managed and confuse the arts with poor circus side shows in an attempt to court popularity (with due respect to circuses which can be very creative). It doesn't like to be told it is the establishment and in many ways the worst of it.

I know from my own my experience any criticism of the ideological and philosophical basis of arts funding is strongly discouraged. For instance, any attempt to assert the importance of the arts to civil society and to social capital building per se, or to portray the arts as anything other than secondary to more utilitarian policy priorities. Arts organisations are effectively forced to accept that the arts are only really valuable to society of they achieve social outcomes, such as engaging with disadvantaged groups or addressing social issues like discrimination, mental health, or knife crime. This occasionally leads to absurdity as the arts are asked to somehow 'make up for' or provide solutions for things which are actually a result of years of government neglect and underfunding. In the meantime the real human value of the arts is undermined and marginalised. To take another example, any attempt to suggest that the arts is worthy of a more imaginative investment strategy aimed at combining artistic merit with popularity and commercial viability are strongly resisted. Anyone who dares to make such an argument is often condemned as a capitalist sell-out. As a result the arts continue to occupy an under-funded space, and often have n opportunity to really connect with wider audiences, and the false idea is fostered that the arts are a 'luxury', 'useless', 'niche' or 'middle class'. Arts organisations are often complicit in this ideological agenda, wringing their hands at their lack of outreach or failure to connect with new audiences, when in fact the entire structure of arts funding conspired to keep the arts marginalised, constrained and 'unpopular'



Expressing sympathy with Brexit goes down terribly in arts sector, right wing views generally get short shrift. This is the problem with free speech.

Fascism.

Definitely anything against shells involvement in the arts sector as they supply a lot of funding. And they massively contribute to climate change, if I spoke out I'd worried I'd never get hired.

Right-wing leaning views.

Too much politically correct media and productions. Any Israeli cultural work deemed outstanding. Bad speaking in ethnically mixed productions, where the artist does not allow him/herself the aspiration of espousing the indigenous language.

Whether a piece of theatre was performance worthy or whether a show like Showboat is not pc. We are stifled because of anachronistic ideology of ill-informed management.

For example, I used to support fox hunting because it was a part of my upbringing – I never admitted it to colleagues or friends. I have since learned more about it and am very much against – but I would never tell anyone this, and I am anti-saboteurs and I wouldn't tell anyone that. Generally though, I think when it's personal and values opinions that the more authentically we express what we believe, the more effectively we can work together – but that comes from someone taking the creative lead on projects, I would like to think that teams we pull together share our values, but where it's crucial that we have a values match on the core issues relating to the project, it isn't about some other unrelated things... I don't know where I'm going with this, maybe rambling because I'm

less passionate about this. Re: above, I would never choose to take actual major issues to task on social media, those things that deal with specific people and organisations. So, yes I would expect to be trolled if I did, but the main reason I would keep it offline is about more effectively achieving the goal of resolving the issues. Bigger things I frequently tweet about – and I choose to keep my political and social justice opinions all one platform, not share those things across.

I try to remain neutral so to be as inclusive as possible. However, in situations where prejudice, bias or unfairness occurs I will speak out. I feel that the arts have great potential to bring change but this isn't usually conducive to a sustainable career. I feel that artists who need to make a living from their practice would be unlikely to be successful if they were to express strong views in any direction but perhaps particularly more right wing views.

Right-of-centre views are rarely expressed in the funded sector but that is balanced by the outright freedom of the private sector to express un-interrogated opinion. Bizarrely we are encouraged to express support for artistic endeavour that challenges the mainstream narrative of the culture we live in but are discouraged from developing that into wider questions of "how shall we therefore choose to live and work together" We are all discouraged from challenging the narrative that we are dependent on public funding. One wouldn't advance that narrative about education or highways as it is a public service. We are all discouraged from re-imagining how a society supports arts and culture. Dissent, enquiry and challenge are all seen as heretical. We are all discouraged from examining and testing policy for effectiveness and accuracy.



Anything critical of Israel. Others on which I cannot elaborate.

Support for right wing alleged politicians – Farage comes to mind and his UKIP party now Brexit. Anyone supporting that would not work in the arts... surely?

I think that a crucial aspect of working in the arts is that the aim is to increase the demographic of audiences. By that criteria I would expect colleagues to be signed up for this and seeing other people as equal, something that right wing views don't tend to support.

The gender and transgender debate. Gender-critical voices, predominantly women and particularly lesbian women, have been shut-down and called bigots for expressing their viewpoints and concerns. Even some gender-critical transgender women have been called 'transphobes', which makes even less sense. The media, the government and many public bodies seem reluctant to enter or even document the debate, which seems unprecedented. I can imagine the Arts and Cultural sector would be trepidatious about broaching the subject, either through sensitivity to transgender people or out of a fear of being branded as bigots, as it seems so easy to be misinterpreted in the current climate.

Racism Certain political issues Certain religious issues.

1. Arts Council are out of touch. 2. Arts Council have become more elitist over the last 10 years. 3. Rural areas continue to be neglected. 4. The imbalance of funding between London and the regions has not been addressed.



Pro Brexit, anti fossil fuel, calling out bullying. Generalised criticism is fine but too specific is not but then I think specific criticism shouldn't be aired on social media but always face to face if possible...

No.

Brexit.

Big lottery Arts council Joseph Rowntree Any of major funders Using the word resilience.

Supporting Conservative policies/government; hard Brexit; ending public funding of the arts and replacing it all with Lottery money; scrapping schemes, programmes, initiatives, etc like Creative People and Places, diversity because it's all political correctness gone mad; not supporting education and outreach because it costs too much. One opinion I once expressed that went down like a cup of cold sick was over independent schools, in the days of Creative Partnerships, Arts Award and Artsmark schools. I asked why they were never invited to take part in these schemes, because it was the children that lost out, yet it was public money and by denying the independent sector to take part at all, it could be said that we were punishing the kids because their parents have chosen or have enough resources to pay for their education directly. I was just curious, really, having worked with the independent sector and having found them eager to take up opportunities and willing to pay. Lots of tight smiles, but no answer and I was under no illusions that this was not a 'good' question.

Northern Irish protestants are the one of the groups that it's still ok to hate. People know very little about them but likening them to KKK and nazis is common place on social media. In many of their communities drug addiction, poverty, crime, low attainment are rife. Ulster Marching Bands provide an opportunity to engage in music making from drum and fife bands to silver, brass and accordion ensembles. Over 50,000 people take part every week. During the golf open tournament in Portrush this year a yearly band parade event was due to happen at that time. Both The Telegraph and The Guardian published articles saying that it shouldn't be allowed and this was a sectarian event, embarrassing and so on. Both the left and right demonising a particular group. Links bellow. Many



bands, especially in that are, work hard to reach out across the sectarian divide. They run community projects featuring Irish musicians and musicians from other cultures. They do this under an atmosphere of constant demonisation, attacks on their buildings and instruments (on one occasion a bus was set on fire with all a bands instruments on board. They are not perfect and sectarian attitudes in many quarters still exist but this is a community emerging from conflict and support rather than attacks will make things better. This view would be labelled as right wing despite the fact that many in this community are left wing. It's just easy to label them all. I expressed this view recently to a person active in my art field and also raised the issue of Corbyn's support for the IRA. Immediately I was labelled as a Tory and realised I should probably keep my mouth shut. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/golf/2019/07/19/provocative-portrush-sons-ulster-march-goes-ahead-despite-opposition/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2019/jul/03/portrush-the-open-championship-orange-parade-northern-ireland-golf>.

Questioning religious based laws: esp. blasphemy, the treatment of women and non-believers in Sharia law and other strict religious laws; diverse political opinions esp. from centre left to the right of the spectrum; anything that may question immigration, open borders proponents; anything to do with terror attacks especially if it does not focus on "Love not Hate" aspects and tries to go beyond the accepted truths and deeper into the subject.

Concerns over implications of GRA reform to single sex spaces. Pro Brexit. Religious beliefs.

It is quite impossible to express any sympathy with Brexit, any positive comments about conservative politicians or policies, or any views that might now be considered socially

conservative (even ones that until recently would have been considered liberal) about, for example, feminism, trans-issues, freedom of speech, etc. It is very hard to discuss the national interest or benefits for the British public (despite these being written into our founding charter) without being accused of nationalistic chauvinism.

anything against the law – so attacking individuals or issues on the grounds of race, sexuality, gender, religion or class.

Some relationships with funders are child and parent and its hard to challenge or open up a dialogue with them even if there are genuine concerns. It cuts down the learning.

Criticism of institutions / funding structures.

Biased opinions on politics that are controversial Condoning projects or figures that have a lack of moral compass.

I think that generally people in the arts are fairly tolerant of views that deviate from the centre but probably less so on the right than the left. So there is for instance plenty of tolerance of diversity but not of people who hold strong views about restricting immigration. And arts workers are more tolerant of pro-choice than pro-life views.

Their views on sexuality, the whole concept of transgender and gender neutral if you disagreed with any of it. War and pacifists I would never show publicly my whole thoughts. Abortion I have strong views on, but I would not state them publicly. Politics, Brexit, another thing to stay away from. Education systems Political correctness gone bonkers on stupid things, like childhood games which are now not safe. It is actually a minefield.

Reservations about transgender issues – eg if you're uncomfortable with gender neutral toilets. I would expect this to risk accusations of bigotry from within the industry. Ditto expressing reservations about gay marriage/ donor fertility/ surrogacy. On the opposite side I think in the current political climate anything which is anti-Brexit or anti-Johnson is likely to attract the wrath of the right wing press. Depending on election outcome we may be looking at a much less free environment where public funding is politically vetted.

That the Arts Council is not fit for purpose. That there is a hierarchy within the arts. That arts funding is biased towards those who can fill out the forms in the way administrators prefer. That political artists are anathema. That artists and workers should be respected for being the ones who actually do the work.

That public funding limits creativity. That actors and other artists have been systematically sidelined by administration and capitalist ethics. That artists are as important as scientists and engineers.

The fact that funders are 'hideously white' and that the sector has now been largely divided into two parts: – the first, the 'creative industries', is largely dominated by well-paid men with close contacts to government and policy makers and draws most of the funding – the second, the 'arts', is largely dominated by much less well paid women and volunteers and is ignored by the funders.



On the above, briefly...I think a review of 'the centre' is in order. I've spent the last five years juggling a PhD with my arts production work and other honorific roles in the sector, and one of the revelatory aspects of that research has been the incremental policing of dissent within the cultural field over the course of my lifetime (since the '70s). The window of 'acceptable discourse' – let alone action – has narrowed significantly and moved increasingly to

the 'right'. As a consequence, whilst people in the arts are less likely to claim publicly opinions in line with the Conservatives, a majority of those in my social media timeline identify with political positions that would have been regarded as right wing in the 1980s. My own position, which to be fair is shared nevertheless by a fair number of artists also on my feed, is then sometimes attacked as #TooFarLeft, as the hashtag has it. Part of this has to do with social class. As is well documented, the field of arts management is predominantly (upper) middle class. From a working class background, I think much of the unconscious bias I encounter comes simply from this: that people in the field simply don't know, have never experienced and don't understand the lived experience of people from poorer backgrounds. There is an unacknowledged sense of entitlement, consistent with canonic cultural paradigms, that is taken for granted. This only now tends to get uncomfortable when it intersects with skin colour, as the racial profile of audiences, artists and managers reflects class bias as much if not more than dispositions to race itself.

It depends on the where, when, and how. I have expressed views and arguments that have offended at one time or another every shade of political opinion. We live in a society where nuance is derided and subtle arguments dealing with grey areas are dismissed as vacuous and examples of flaky thinking. I believe the artist can and should deal with nuance and engage with the paradoxes and contradictions of society

People that wish to leave Europe People that support a Tory government despite historical cuts to the arts People that have ways of paying less tax than they should (off shore accounts etc) Admitting how much debt their organisation has Admitting that they cannot afford to pay their staff the real living wage Knowing they have policies in place to be inclusive but will find loop holes to not employ people with disabilities.

Anti-capitalism That money spent on arts and culture is as valid as money spent on hospitals.



You need to look at the commercial sector (theatre in my case) for comparison. Commercial theatre-makers are not dependent on funding bodies, and are happy to talk about factors that affect their business interests. I would be interested in a similar survey conducted among them, and to see what the differences are.

Homophobia, racism, disablism, sexism, misogyny, and I'm pleased if they don't express those views.

Expressing views to do with different requirements for born-women as opposed to self-identifying women is considered transphobic. Saying that you see nothing wrong with an able bodied actor taking on a disabled role – though I'd have problem hearing a white actor should 'black up' to play a BAME role!

Brexit – ie leavers funding – that the arts shouldn't attract any public funding Anything that could be interpreted as sexist, racist, homophobic or hate-induced in general.

See previous comments about white men in the arts, particularly working class white men. That employment to address diversity and to positively discriminate can mean talented, created and competent individuals who don't fit those classifications are sidelined to meet quotas.

I think left-of-centre opinions are just as likely to be controversial, in terms of the general public in Northern Ireland. The conservatism of audiences – and boards of some larger institutions – feels mismatched with a lot of the attitudes and ideas of people working in the arts.

I think that right-of-centre politics is less present in the arts and Brexit is a thorny issue

(that's difficult for everyone though). You have to be careful in how you discuss certain artworks, particularly if they deal with an issue that affects a minority group that you are not a part of. I am thinking of the controversy over the painting of a black victim by a white artist, exhibited in America – Dana Schutz's Open Casket, in the Whitney Biennial. There are also discussions about Trans people that can get very heated very quickly, so I would be cautious about talking about some things online. I am always keen on advocating for more diversity in the arts, but I am also aware that talking about some things could cause a furious backlash if you are not very careful. I think we should be talking about colonialism in galleries and museums, the lack of female artists being represented equally, the ignoring of disabled artists and the persecution of LGBTQ artists, but I have seen people online getting very bad responses to some opinions they have, so, while I can and do advocate for diversity, I am also careful about how I phrase things.

I try to keep politics out of my art online as I would like my presence to be a fairly neutral one. I can't help but share some of my political leanings but do not share and promote as much as I would like for fear of both boring and ostracizing followers. Contentious things might include: Questioning value of some funded activities. Questioning point of arts events delivered to support the sector that actually waste time for Artists. Activities and value for money of lead organisations. Carbon footprint of arts events and training events especially those addressing green agenda!!

If an arts manager wanted to programme a talk by a certain right wing MEP, as that person lives in the local area and is a keen supporter of the arts, then they would be met with incredulity, derision and scorn by other officers, Board Members and councillors

in the area. Accepting sponsorship from certain companies that might have a strong investment bias that is perceived as being anti-climate change, or having a heritage of colonial background or slavery background e.g. Tate & Lyle, would result in strong censorship by other arts officers, councillors and Trustees.

Any criticism of funders – they are sacrosanct.

buzz areas that are hot right now or contentious e.g. putting men's attitudes and opinions at the forefront (would like it noted I am a female artist) anything challenging Judaism anything challenging lgbtq+.

No. None. It's the arts and we should always discuss everything, expression is our craft and saviour in all aspects. To not discuss is wrong nothing should be taboo. The arts should always discuss exhibit, write about everything for the sake of our society. It can be challenged and should be challenged and discussion and decisions should be based on all contributing factors.

Racially prejudicial opinions, Personal attacks, (Unfounded) criticisms of an organisation (without talking to the organisation first), Gender biased opinions.

Right wingness – a copy of The Spectator winds up in our kitchen regularly, on top of the Guardian. People move it around – it's a weird game of passive aggressive, opinion-based cat and mouse. Chauvanism – there's a bunch of 'woke' men who think you can only be a feminist in their ideal. Equally there's a bunch of confused women who

aren't sure if they can place misogyny in the picture of what they experience, and on-one truly grows. Racial prejudice masking as positive discrimination. A lack of action on unconscious biases

Anything vaguely right-wing or pro Brexit

I have seen examples of projects that led to online trolls that were



critical of the way that money was being spent

That the pay is horrendous. That it's dominated by old, white men with often little to no clue about what they are doing but with the power to oppress those with good ideas. That you support Brexit, or really any right-wing politics. That the sector is too focused on young people that other groups are being ignored. That most diversity schemes are shallow and not working That we are simply repeating work that's already been researched and done and touting it as ground-breaking – see diversity reports and things about getting young people into work.

Views around Brexit, globalisation, race, gender, immigration, taxation: I would argue almost any c/Conservative viewpoint would hurt their public image.

Comments about sexuality, gender, and any other protected characteristics. Views about different social classes – except upper and middle classes who are always ripe for mockery, including being 'outed' as being perceived to be middle class as if you're part of the problem. Any non-liberal/left opinions. Any sympathy/empathy/understanding of right-of-centre figures. Religious views or beliefs, especially Christian. Feeling excluded because of age.

I think politically the arts is quite traditionally left wing and assumes that the majority working within it is. I think this assumption can lead to those who are not feeling unable to express opinions in the same way for fear of being called out. I've noticed this particularly around individual positions around re: Brexit and organisation's assumptions that everyone feels the same way on this matter.

Supporting Brexit or the Conservatives; Being happy to take funding from controversial companies such as oil or pharma; Criticising a grant funder for their decisions in giving or turning down a grant;





Alt right political views – and I'd be happy to see no platforming here, as I find such views repellent. Blatant racism or sexism – ditto

Unfair pay Expectations to work until the job is done instead of until the fee/time is finished Right of centre politics Not understanding something to do with inclusivity Some white middle class male arts professional are good people

It really hard when arts organisations are based in Tory-controlled local authority areas and receive public subsidy to criticize. It is also really hard to criticize is in receipt of ACE NPO funding to criticize ACE. This is always noticeable when organisations become unfunded. I do not believe organisations should promote political allegiances in the same way arts venues should not host party political activities in their buildings. Arts spaces should be neutral and welcoming to all, no matter of political believes. I struggle with organisations hosting political campaign launches like BAC did for Labour this week, if that was UKIP for example, there would be some follow up press! I don't think politics with a big P should play apart in the arts, political work can take place without be party political and can still have the same impact.

I think anything overtly political can be problematic but not just for arts and culture workers – I think in general our politics are so polarised at the moment that it can be difficult to outlined views online with any sort of safety.

Anything which comes across as privileged especially to do with money and race (if they are white) Anything that could be considered 'right wing. Anything to do with meritocracy. Any real and true experience of the frustrations and challenges of working

with diverse groups.

Views either on the centre-right or far left.

I think some of these questions depend on if you are an artist or work within an organisation – often artists can take on a role of a change maker or be more outspoken and they can 'represent' or become the provocateurs (although this is complex and i am sure this is the few rather than the majority) Definitely those who work within orgs cannot express personal opinions without holding back and or thoughts around ramifications for themselves or the org they work for, unless there has been agreed strategy or approach. Certainly most people would not and do not openly challenge funders – and funding to those organisations who perhaps need to be challenged or have funding withdrawn. The arts sector has always been about relationships from the top down!

Questioning relationships with UK councils and foreign governments. Questioning the destruction of heritage sites to be replaced with countless high rise luxury flats. Questioning the lack of transparency overall with our local council in particular. It feels like there is a lot of 'art washing' or 'culture washing'. They are big funders for many of the arts and culture in the city.

Support for Brexit, criticism of feminism, criticism of multiculturalism, criticism of mass immigration, any right-of-centre political view.

Beyond the obvious such as supporting Brexit or having sympathy with right of centre politics, I think there are some other more arts related taboos. For example, questioning the supremacy of the performing arts, particularly in relation to funding; not seeing



Producers as Gods; preferring to celebrate the achievements of writers rather than actors (why are they so self congratulatory?); challenging rates of pay for most arts employees

If you were to admit an activity or exhibition took no account of the sexuality of the audience you would be criticised.

that women face discrimination because of their sex.

I think it is very difficult for people in the sector to express dis-satisfaction about how a funder is behaving/operating. I have heard that a senior decision maker in a funding organisation indicated that if a Freedom of Information request was received it would demonstrate that the person requesting was antagonistic or in opposition to the funder. I think there are regional differences and the South West of England is particularly vulnerable if questioning a significant funding organisation.

Having voted for Brexit Support for the Conservatives or any other right-wing party That we shouldn't worry so much about stereotyping in heritage works, cultural appropriation, 'whitewash' casting That people with certain ethnicities, body shapes etc shouldn't play certain roles That we shouldn't worry so much about climate change Just typing this in an anonymous survey, I feel compelled to emphasise that I don't support any of the above – far from it! However, I do think that it is important that such views, which are held by so many, are voiced and that we listen and create opportunities to debate them openly.



Personal opinion will always divide some people's own take on things. The important issue here is a fair system that hopefully champions equality and inclusivity.

Criticism of other arts organisations, and especially of funding decisions...

Anything to do with Diversity Anything that concerns 'reach', inclusivity.

One instance among others – religious convictions.

Issues around trans rights Brexit (naturally) The continuing existence of the Arts Council Whether the Arts Council is patriarchal Funding for Opera Colour blind casting.

Anything that contravenes policies on inclusion.

Yes.

Criticism of the large funders' strategies or mechanisms – of which there are many. Opposition to the idea of public subsidy. Rightwing or anti-liberal politics.

Strong religion-based beliefs that conflict with equality of protected characteristics Doubts around the validity of creative work motivated by 'identity politics' I should stress that these things can be said and, most often, respected in interpersonal dialogue. But stating something publicly opens an individual into public debate. To do so in a public sphere will therefore affect one's professional relationships and reputation if 'core principles' dominant in the arts aren't shared.

Bad treatment by a venue Poor practice by an organisation Double standards by key people in the arts Naming and Shaming.

Saying support for Brexit has destroyed prospects in most ACE funding programmes. No one dares to say anything else

Support for Tory government cutting arts funding.

Lack of funding for artists Lack of employment rights for artists Not being paid promptly/sufficiently for work already undertaken Unrealistic reporting/admin requirements associated with various roles



That public funding doesn't work as it is currently constituted That funding bodies and funded organisations often have a corrupt relationship That people in the arts are really not that badly paid any more in comparison with other sectors That the arts tend to do well under the Tories (A "strategic bung" as one ex Arts Minister said to me) That a lot of people in the arts have a very cushy life That they support Brexit (in fact don't tell me that either..) That they talk nonsense about their relationship with their audience That Beyonce is a more important cultural figure than Olivia Coleman

Pro-Brexit Conservative Elitist Pro-gentrification Climate change sceptic Pro-Trump Nationalist Monarchist Religious Anti-NHS Capitalist Pro-war Pro-nuclear Anti-immigration/ anti-refugee Etc.

That bi-gender is a nonsense. That equality of outcome (unlike equality of opportunity) is unworkable in a democracy.

People here can touch on environmental issues though just enough to make the gallery appear liberally minded. People's rights are rarely addressed instead those issues are circumvented with literal paintings about abuse against women that are so badly done it makes me take the other side. The Right Wing here use abuse against women heavily to promote themselves when really matters are way more complex. Homelessness is huge here, I have seen schmaltzy looking paintings of homeless guys having a great time having a drink together, that is benevolence at its worst. They are not a subject or the benevolent middle class gaze, it is a large and complex issue which Rembrandt did way better at and Ribera. You can never criticise the winner of major portrait prizes here yet they are totally safe. You cannot critique anything at all here. I have attempted to do so online very lightly

and have ben pilloried for that. My work is very high end yet it cannot find a place here it is so far right wing it is depressing and woeful I cannot describe how bad it would take pages. btw I am from [www.holykitsch.com.au](http://www.holykitsch.com.au) I do my own work and have collaborated with Mexican artists. I feel beaten.

Inadequate levels of funding by government Criticism of current government policies.

Hah! It really depends on where you're based I think and what job you're doing. In London I perceive far more arts group-think. Anything pro-Brexit, pro-Conservative would really be beyond the pale. I'd consider myself a classic arts person btw left of centre, pro-Europe intersectional feminist, but I do live outside of London and am constantly surprised by the inability of my peers to understand or comprehend or even listen to any other views. Friends in London were shocked about the Brexit vote – I was sad, but I wasn't surprised at all. In the regions, you're far more likely to find people with more right wing views and opinions working in the arts – still not so much in the artistic teams, but absolutely within the staff working on finance, marketing, technical, operations. I think where there are less arts specialists working in the arts – that they're drawn more from the communities they serve, it's much more representative and less shocking when someone expresses a 'divergent opinion'.

Cultural confusion because of mass immigration. Weakening of art education through simplistic multicultural thinking. Value of Christian marriage. Danger of censorship within and in relation to some immigrant groups (eg Rochdale).

Notions that some s/c minority groups are more favoured than others Any criticism

whatsoever of any LGBT+ cabal The notion that the arts are a level playing field at the point of entry and getting funded is quite wrong and misleading The notion that arts are for everybody is quite a convenient tag on which to spin a funding application, but not much else – that the arts at least at the highly paid and marketed level are something of a closed shop To idea that arts can bring about valuable social change has been somewhat overstated, in its efforts to justify itself That art that thinks it's promoting valuable social change (often preaching to the concerted) is on the whole incredibly dull That significant inequality still exists in the arts and in a sense the insistence on demographic definitions for much of it threatens to ghettoise certain constituencies further.

Given on first page of survey. Other examples... Thinking about my own opinions...My opinions are mostly left wing and liberal, so I mostly don't feel like I need to censor myself. But one thing I wouldn't comment on is how often I see publicly-funded theatre and spoken word poetry and think it's a load of old tosh that's been funded purely because it addresses important issues. If I wasn't scared I would speak much more openly about that – about how funding seems to go to work that is apparently politically 'challenging' but actually just repeats the same ideas that all left wing liberal people already agree on e.g. women are discriminated against, ethnic minorities are discriminated against, etc. I agree that certain groups in society have been and still are discriminated against. And I am in favour of funding aimed specially at these under-represented groups. But I find the content of a lot of this work deadly boring, as it's just repeating the same

ideas and the audiences are all people who already agree with those ideas. There's a place for everything, including work that's directly about difficult issues like discrimination. But what about funding people from, e.g., ethnic minorities to make work where their ethnicity is merely incidental? Where it's just an amazing piece of art? And what about the fact that, although I am a white middle



class 36-year old woman, I feel very much like an outsider in the poetry world? I still don't understand why, but it's something I would hesitate to talk about, because I'm not from an under-represented group, so I can't really offer an explanation as to why I feel so excluded. I feel that often things are reduced to gender, class, ethnicity, disability/ability when in fact life is much more complicated than that. There are all sorts of reasons people can be or feel excluded that don't come under any of those headings, but are still really valid and important – things perhaps just to do with personality and personal history. The conversation around these issues seems to me very simplistic. These thoughts are all thoughts I wouldn't share publicly.

Freedom of speech is vital, so for me it's not the what but how it's said. Let's end aggressive, abusive language and behaviour.

Brexit Gender critical Telling an artist/artistic director they are wrong. That senior leaders are not good at their jobs, and aren't accountable enough. That the drug and sex culture does not make them edgy or cool.

- to call out discrimination - to call out unaccountability - to call out bullying - to call out poor working conditions - to call out misuse of funds.

Canadian law (Canada Revenue Agency, CRA) specifies how much political activity a "charity" can carry out and the CRA has the discretion to determine what qualifies as political. For example, under our previous Conservative government a Bird Club was chastised and audited for speaking our about the effects of climate change on bird populations. At the same time "think tanks" many of which are registered charities that supported fossil fuel companies were ignored. Although this could have had a serious impact on freedom of speech it just made many people mad and while the arts charities were circumspect, individual artists and not-for-profits spoke out very loudly. Of course, crossing swords with major corporations can result in funding from those sources drying



up.

That transwomen are Male. And all that follows from that. People who stand up for women's rights are demonised.

To question why so many people working in children's theatre have no experience of being parents...

Why they don't/can't actually implement fair pay policies for freelancers even though it's a funding expectation.

In smaller local authorities, public funding is reliant on knowing people and having a reputation for being able to get along. Critical comments are met with hostility.

Questions or criticism of any organisation or it's staff Personal grievances Challenges to transparency Concern about misogyny in new and old guises.

Views on whether quotas for people like female composers will solve the problem (if indeed there is a problem!) Views on Whether artificially promoting people from BAME backgrounds is right Arguing that diversity is not just a race issue.

Anything that involves politics, also writing comedies that deal with race and gender identities do need to do well enough that don't offend people the wrong way.

Strong views against same-sex relationships.

Homosexuality, inclusivity, parity in gender employment, LGBT rights, abortion.

ACE is not fit for purpose Many of the larger NPOs are bloated and complacent Many

arts orgs are misinterpreting the Equality Act and conflating sex with gender which is leading to rolling back of safeguarding protections for women Chasing funding means organisations pay lip service to equality, diversity, environmental impacts without thinking through deeper ramifications to society and/or barely touching the surface of the issue.

Anything that is classed as politically incorrect in the UK.

Support for Brexit, libertarianism.

Elitism in arts is not a bad thing as such – no-one would call top athletes elitist, so why us? Like it or not, widening participation is populism in disguise.

negative funding decisions Decisions by funders that go to the 'same old' (regularly funded) artists and companies.

I think most people working in the arts tend to hold left or centre-left political opinions. If someone were to hold a more right-leaning view I think they would think twice about expressing it. For example, I know an artist who voted in favour of Brexit who feels unable to share that point of view with many of his colleagues. I also think some points of view come with assumptions, that would lead people to hold back on expressing certain views. For example, I'm a practicing Christian, and have had people assume that this must mean I'm anti-LGBT, against women's rights, and believe in creationism. None of these are true, but repeated experiences have made me question the wisdom of expressing my faith in certain situations.

Cultural disregard. To simplify even noting poor experience with a specific group of people

is highly dangerous in a world where we all have an equal platform. I like this issue as it is correct to be challenged on assumptions based on little more than personal anecdote. The issue arises when one writes work with a realistic character that does this. Is this character the author's "true" voice? Can it be copied by those who misunderstood the overall message? Can an author express misunderstanding, open themselves up to scrutiny and learn from their audience reaction? This is less of a sector problem and more of audience acceptance, however they ultimately pay our bills in some form. Considering how a work with a controversial discussion point can burn a writer/maker out before they even start.

I actually don't think, due to the open and confident nature of the majority of people in the industry, that many feel at risk of expressing from fear of fall out of others within the industry. Opinions of those from within the industry are more prone to backlash from those outside the industry. Subjects that are difficult to champion outside of the cultural industry from within without negative reaction is -funding -access to arts from those from BAME or low economic backgrounds -The benefits of arts education -women's reproductive rights & access to work post baby -the importance of grassroots cultural activity -The importance of BAME heritage in UK society -The effect of Brexit on the cultural industries -The decline in arts provision and funding under Tory leadership.

No.

Direct criticism of government leaders who hold the purse strings – particularly in smaller cities, smaller governments. Bigger governments are better designed to withstand criticism, although I would say that this also depends on the issue and the perceived power of the complainant. In our area, people have the "don't bite the hand..." mentality. They accept what is given them and make do, but it isn't enough anymore. They complain to each other but do not band together



to create a stronger voice and demand changes or the opportunity to help shape funding and infrastructure to do with arts & culture. People are tired, doing things on a shoestring and doing things in the same old ways – there doesn't seem to be energy to fight or work it out.

Opinions on Brexit, on the current government, on oil sponsorship /unethical sponsorship.

Supporting leaving the EU! Voting Conservative. Not reading the Guardian! Exposing Tracey Emin as being both talent-less and a Tory!

My experience has simply been that to question the status quo of people with power results in an onslaught on a small organisation or independent artist. These people will use whatever means they can to then bully individuals.

I do think that a discussion of my employer's financial arrangements – e.g. funding from the public sector – would not be a proper issue for me to discuss in public unless I was directly involved in decision-making involving those arrangements. I would expect an employer to take employee views into account where controversial financial arrangements are concerned.

Pro-brexit.

Any questioning of diversity issues or in theatre, gender balance issues.

I think personally everything should be open, as long as there is a degree of sensitivity if an issue that could be considered off limits, such as the holocaust. Art promotes dialogue, fail to engage because the topic is off limits is a form of self censorship based on a perception of outcomes being negative, but I do not advocate controversy just for the sake of it, as a way of promoting ones reputation or agenda.

Sexism or anything that challenges white male leadership.





### Political views.

Anti Israeli opinions Opposition to the British Legion poppy appeal or campaigns such as 'Help for Heroes'.

### Political alignment.

In the contemporary visual arts there is huge pressure (from funding control) to conform to one particular 'school' with standards emanating from the 'Curatoriat' which derives from the lasting influence of the Serota cult and its narrow take on the range of legitimate practice. It is not wise to pronounce on the prevalence of Arts Council and DCMS 'freemasonry'. This used to be ensured through appointments to the 'Advisory Panel' system, but since that disappeared the petty corruption is even less visible or accountable. The BAME territory is also a quagmire of hypocrisy which can work both ways (which can make it both too easy and too difficult to succeed depending on the fashions and politically correct criteria being applied at any particular time).

### No, thank you. Q.E.D.

Criticism of funding organisations and requisite criteria for funding. There's a problem with salary levels in general and pay equality is an issue that people are reluctant to talk openly about both in the publicly funded and commercial environments. Levels of pay for 'names' rather than unknown performers and compared to back of house admin roles.

Issues on pay, transparency, racism in the sector, issues with funders, galleries, employers (ill advised in the sense these things could be dangerous for their careers/livelihood but should be talked about and addressed).

That nepotism is wrong That Artistic Directors of institutions should only be allowed to hold the post for 10 years That Board Members should only serve max of 6 year terms That in order to save the arts we need to cut more funding from Band 3 organisations That artists should have a say in who gets the top jobs in our buildings and institutions Although I don't hold the following opinions I can see how someone who does would be ostracised if they were giving opinions that were right wing.

Questioning of how ACE staff conduct themselves. Questioning of how boards of large organisations are run, and how this influences what is available to them. Questioning of how diversity in the arts is being supported and whether it is actually serving the people it says it is. If xtinction rebellion is a valid form of protest. Anything about how one's class affects ones prospects.

I could give you so many examples – especially in Spain – that it would be too long.

### Political opinions.

Opinions of religious and political nature seem to be disregarded and ostracised more often, be it on the far right or far left wing spectrum. [Liberal] opinions on race, gender, and sexuality have become more acceptable to be expressed. All of these, though, would be frowned upon in countries with more conservative political systems, or even countries with Communist-spectrum systems, such as China or Vietnam.

Political opinions against the Israeli Occupation and the Palestinian Authority. Opinions related to taboo issues in the community about sexuality or nakedness.

Any opinions on funders decision making. Political opinions that are not in line with



funders or board members. Innovative thinking.

It feels to me as though there is a closed network that you have to try to get in to before you can access opportunities. Most meetings, workshops, activities and talks seem to be evenings and weekends which is difficult as a single parent. Could do with some of these opportunities within school hours. Lots of opportunities for young people, yet not as much geared towards more mature artists. Some of the opportunities for older artists feel patronising and 'hobby' centred. Not wanting to be a social, public or community artist is something I feel I can't express. I feel as though being a quite reclusive artist works against me. I feel as though I must be socially engaged, good at marketing and social media and in line with current trends in order to get any headway. Racial profiling. Feel like I am pressured into being a 'black' artist. Funding is hard to apply for. Need to know and understand the jargon, have connections, know exactly the budget which is not always conducive to free expression and exploration. Lack of affordable studio spaces. So many people in the art field seem to make money from artists trying to show their work. Have to pay for competitions, gallery applications, high commission rates, etc.

Pro Brexit in current climate Taking a stance anti the Green Lobby Taking an anti Israeli stance.

Issues with funders, seeing the way certain things work behind the scenes and knowing that calling it out might reduce chances of future investment or partnership. Political ideologies – afraid it may put off certain audience sectors. Afraid to create vital work which talks about socio-political issues in case it doesn't get funded or faces criticism which leads to lack of future work. Afraid to publicly complain about the struggle artists face for fear of being told to 'get a proper job' amongst many other things.



Comments on Brexit and how that would negatively impact business. Rising insurance costs. General increase in costs. Political views.

Really low wages compared to other sectors. Privilege: how some people get to do the job / lack of transparency / word of mouth employment opportunities for friends of friends. Again privilege: it's always the same people who get to work for charities and the sector: usually white, middle-class, 'local' team members who can afford to work for less because they still live with their families or come from wealthy backgrounds. Disabled and international (non-UK born) candidates are invited to job interviews to tick boxes, but will rarely get the job. Transphobia: it's sad to see how you can't express an opinion on some topics. Even as a LGBTQ+ supporter you get instantly labelled as 'transphobic' if you make a comment on the slight inconvenience of 'gender-neutral toilets' for example. Apparently even making comments on people looks has become controversial. I mean, nice comments of course. Seriously?

Too many to re-count here.

Criticism of the way the arts are funded. On one hand lottery funding which comes mainly from lower socio-economic groups who then don't engage or benefit from the activity or facilities. On the other, worshipping the rich who splash their cash on naming things. I think the reticence of the culture sector in declaring a climate emergency was also bound up in fears about funding and upsetting the apple cart in relationships with other sectors eg tourism.

Any views that are contrary to transgender activism – anything that would be deemed old-fashioned radical feminism. Any views that put religion on a par with secularism – particularly Christianity. Any views that support Brexit or conservatism. Any views that challenge the ostracism of those rumoured – but not found – to have acted in any way that could be called out by MeToo campaigners.



Being Christian – expressing Christian (i.e. evangelical) views (other religions OK)  
Supporting Brexit Supporting capitalism Questioning multi-culturalism Questioning the need to broaden the audience base Any kind of patriarchal, colonial, white, male viewpoint.

Support for oppressive regimes (eg Hong Kong / China) (Other organisations such as universities are happy to set up satellite campuses in places like China, but arts organisations welcoming Chinese support could be seen as controversial). Support for corporates such as BP or Shell – yet other organisations such as universities would happily accept such support. (eg Cambridge University as recently as 2010 accepted funding from the BP Foundation to endow a chair (BP Foundation McKenzie Professor of Earth Sciences).

I have a son who is trans. Plenty of people have opinions on his right to exist and his right express his gender identity. This debate is one I watch on social media with sadness.

Support for Donald Trump Support for Brexit Anti climate change.

Criticism of the Arts Council and its ways of funding/priorities. Criticism of funders (as with any other sector). Criticism of those organisations with more power and venues especially.

That ACE is corrupt and a sham (not saying I think this! Basically anything hugely against ACE) -That x funder is corrupt and a sham -That they should have got x funding bid they were unsuccessful in -That positive discrimination is definitely the way to go for a bit re: addressing gender and racial inequalities in hiring -That only some people deserve certain types of art -That only certain types of art deserve funding/attention -That the arts and culture sector is very much tied to our country's ideas of neoliberalism and

capitalism, so isn't some sort of totally morally superior entity.

The REAL truth behind cultural homogeneity in the arts = Power and cultural protectionism – who's protecting their own salary and how.

This is delicate and difficult to describe and depends on context and on the individual people working within the funding organisations and the nature of the criticism. Being wary is not the same as being quiet.

Opinions about the practices of funding bodies Criticism of organisations and their practice Challenging views held by people in positions of power Opinions about politics – local and national.

Any criticism of private funders whose business practices are somewhat un-ethical could cause unrest and result in the withdrawal of that funding.

The imbalance of white men in top positions, the gender pay gap as this can lead to isolation from top organisations.

People won't criticise the latest hero to have 'called out' someone. They gather in groups. Ironically, when they themselves are called out, they become part of the victim group. Forgiveness and learning seem to be alien concepts at the moment. No one will allow you to do either. Or to ask the sector to consider it. There are definitely people who won't speak out explicitly about representation, diversity, workplace harassment. They tend to say something oblique.

Admitting to having conservative political leanings. In certain scenarios being supportive

of trans artists and trans rights.

Many hypothetical examples could be given, eg: where personal beliefs or convictions conflict with the promotion of LGBTQ+ agendas; where personal beliefs or convictions conflict with promotion or funding of faith-based initiatives; where an individual seeks to question (not to challenge or confront, but merely examine) the prevailing orthodoxy of an institution or organisation; where an individual might question, for example, 'decolonisation' of an institution or creative curriculum on the grounds that it might recast historical narrative in an objectively untrue way, or may result in the airbrushing of the same; where an individual might raise concerns about the political affiliation or financial dealings (eg: arms trading, dealing with repressive regimes, etc) of commercial sponsors... note: equality is not the issues in the examples above; rather, the coercive promotion of one agenda over others.

I once attended an event with a theatre critic and they asked me how I was enjoying the show at the interval, I gave an honest answer and said I was not enjoying the show and thought the production values were low. Their exact response to me was: "You can't say that they are highly thought of in the industry". I told them that I could say that if that was what I felt; that based on what I was seeing that reputation was not justified and if they didn't want an honest answer then why ask the question! Needless to say they have not been in contact since!



Taking a strong stance against/ for certain funding, e.g. the Sackler Trust.

Clear open criticism of funding structures and even more of so-called agreed criteria for funding. ACE's criteria are vague and nonsensical.

Any negative opinion that points to the wrongdoings of the current government.

Political opinions.

I've not experienced any.

Working practices of arts council and the way in which relationships are managed.

The poverty of expertise in the sector. Very few STEM graduates leads to a mono-culture in terms of outlook and problem solving approaches – ultimately leading to a circular, ever-diminishing set of solutions that lack innovation or currency.

I am a bit perturbed by the use of the term "right of centre" in the previous questions. I would consider myself left of centre. The criticism I have faced has not been to do with my opinions, but the fact that I am the person expressing them. Right and left are less important in this bizarre age of identity politics.

It can be from as simple as if I say a show is bad, I've had negative feedback from the venue on this. Or asking how they spend their money and what their reliance is on free labour.

Yes, plenty: - That there should be no additional bars to freedom of speech (beyond those that already exist relating to inciting violence). - That refusing to listen to someone's (anyone's!) arguments by no-platforming them is never a way to change hearts and minds. . . - That offending people with your words is not a crime; - That teaching a dog to do a Nazi salute should not have you sent to prison (feel free to think it is in vile, and condemn it, just don't criminalise it). That the EU is anti-democratic and through its tariffs has inhibited economic development in Africa; That you would like to see a Conservative majority at the December election.

Brexit – I worked with someone that had voted for this and had valid reasons for doing



so. They found it best to lie about their leaning towards leaving the EU as the theatre we were working for were somewhat militant towards remaining. It is a very sensitive subject in the arts as funding will be affected but if your opinion differs then why not express this. You may have the way forward after we leave! Bullying and harassment from long serving members of the arts sector and larger organisations – unless the organisation is going to fully support and protect the victim it is pointless to raise this. Sadly it's best to simply resign.

A more considered and differentiated response to 'Me Too'

Please see my previous comments. Thank you.

RACISM.

That freedom of movement for artists is not a valuable thing for us to retain.

Any criticism of the box-ticking diversity agenda Any criticism of the trans rights movement Any challenge to left wing authoritarianism Any centrist or right wing view point.

In our organisation those who voted to leave the EU have been ostracised. Whilst remainers plaster Bollox to Brexit stickers all over the office. We have also received emails containing petitions to stop Brexit from the CEO despite half the office voting to leave. Anyone who is right of centre is personally and politically unable to have a view on anything or challenge anything that's extremely left wing or politically correct for fear of being called racist, xenophobic, bigoted etc Been working class in a predominantly middle class profession you are constantly criticised and reprimanded for been too 'direct'

when just stating a clear, honest answer to work issues. There is very little acceptance amongst the middle class arts sector that you might have a different background and your viewed as a trouble maker or challenging.

supporting conservative party policies supporting Brexit a greater role for the private sector in the arts celebrating/ valuing longevity of experience.

The arts sector is owned and run by the elite. Working class 'art' is under represented.

- community participation in creation will lower the overall quality of a show/ programme  
- arts council don't have enough transparency in their systems and allow conflicts of interest to occur regularly – it might be right wing views would be more difficult, but not impossible to express publicly.

Pro-Brexit opinions. Support for Conservative party policies or politicians. Scrutinising diversity targets and motives. Questioning the trend towards gender neutrality, using certain pronouns, gender neutral spaces, toilets etc.

Criticism of funders' policies, targets and funding requirements.

Questioning issues of race, gender, Brexit.

Criticism of public funders, their policies, and their practices.

I became a professional artist by training and working long hours for many years, often unpaid. I produce good work, garner excellent reviews, play to large audiences, but at 63 years of age feel the weight of ageism projected without conscience by many working in the subsidised sector.

This question and the use of the definition 'controversial opinions' reminds to what I've written earlier. The love of white middle-class people for debate without thinking of the consequences of what that implies for marginalised communities. In the cultural sector, we are trying to create an environment that is safe for people of colour, trans people, LGBTQI+ people, disabled people, people with different legal status so opinions against those people are not 'controversial' or 'ill-advised' they are racist, transphobic, homophobic, ableist and shouldn't have space in our sector. People with these opinions don't have to be worried though, there is plenty of space for all their mainstream opinions in our societies run by Tumps, Johnsons, Farages.

Support for Brexit; Israel has a right to exist; approval of President Trump; disapproval of 'gender identity' ideology; concern about uncontrolled immigration; doubts about the extent of climate change.

17.4 million voted for Brexit. Most of the opinions of these people, on many subjects, would lose them employment in the publicly funded arts sector in the UK.

That you've been bullied or harassed by someone who is in the 'in-crowd'. That artists (and institutions) maybe shouldn't be advancing their careers by creating work with vulnerable people without proper training in ethics / teaching / counselling / social work. That we should listen to everyone in the community, even if people don't want to hear it.



It depends what you mean by ill-advised. I've heard gallery directors say (for example) that there's nothing wrong with artists burning out and failing in their careers because of the pressure, and a board member of a huge London institution say that paying artists too much spoils them so they should be kept as poor as possible. I think things like this are highly ill-advised (to put it politely). But I assume you mean ill-advised for their own good, and in

this case I can think of lots. Anything to do with gender issues, especially trans issues, will get a lot of flak for either not being on message enough, or being off message, or too on message. It's become pretty much a no-win situation where the only sensible thing to do is not engage with anyone publicly about it, and especially with the zealots on both sides who won't listen to any kind of fact, compromise or reason on the subject. LGBTQ+ issues and the language around them are becoming (again) similarly a minefield even for people who are LGBTQ+ themselves or active allies. In general it's become difficult for anyone to talk publicly in any kind of intersectional way without running into a lot of criticism for talking outside "their" community. Talking about the art world's penchant for bad business, offshoring money, money laundering, etc. will get you into trouble. Talking about low pay, exploitation, financial mismanagement and bad employment practices in any sector of the arts from galleries to theatre will get you labelled a troublemaker by a lot of the senior people who work in those fields.

Support for Brexit; criticism of Trans rights activism; questioning of the discourses of systemic racism and white Privilege; criticism of BDS, and conversely support for Israel; criticism of #metoo.

It's ill-advisable to talk about how key cultural institutions spear-headed the introduction of zero hour contracts into the workplace and how trustees can cover-up their colleagues unlawful activities. Also questioning why most NPOs are exempt from presenting full accounts and FOI requests is not wise. Asking for institutional archives to be more open to other views about how they present their own narratives is also dangerous.

I think your question right of centre is odd – as many women who are left of centre find they can't discuss opinions in relation to sex for instance.

Younger, particularly recent graduate or undergraduate artists, early career artists have told me that expressing support for Brexit would be career suicide. Artists are afraid to





contest Trans rights activists' positions for fear of vitriolic verbal and sometimes physical violence against them, particularly women artists. For example, saying that a woman is an adult female can be seen as hate speech or hate crime. To be critical of identity, particularly race, cultural or gender politics can be too easily defined as "hate speech" and reported to authorities or employers who fail to see the difference between humour, critical difference and genuine threat of violence against someone due to political belief, or stated identity.

**Q13 Please give more details of the circumstances under which you have felt under pressure.**

As mentioned earlier, I've been told in the past that the work I'd been a part of as an exercise in 'reverse racism'.

I was preparing a solo show talking about body positivity. My painting cycle consisted of lettering painting and those with nudes. Unfortunately, the director of the place despite earlier declaration has decided to ban nude paintings arguing they are too controversial and not follow his political orientation.

Pressurised to remove certain references within family production. Seems petty but was personally traumatic.

Miss understanding of images use within promoting arts. This has come from images used by LGBTB artists that have been miss understood by straight workers. There can be a confusion between equality and areas such as expressions of sexuality etc.

Last year, our festival brochure was held up for weeks by the Head of Coms and Managing Director of our charity because it contained the picture of a dildo inside the programme (would your children recognised one if they saw one?) and it promoted a show called 'Old people, Die, Die, Die!'. The charity, funded by the Council, worried that these 2 shows would upset our masters since they had already complained about 2 shows the previous year. In the end we had to ask one company to change their image, and the other to change their show title (!), which I felt undermined our professional credibility with artists. I was also banned from programming an outdoor comedy about parking, because



this would be 'acknowledging that there is a parking issue in the borough'. A project did not receive funding at Committee level because it acknowledged a 'post-Brexit world', and another became under intense scrutiny because it talked about knife crime, and Councillors refused to acknowledge it was relevant to their borough.

See above.

Wrote a report about audience and the arts – revealing what audiences thought about local arts organisations – the views were not positive and the local arts scene gave me stick!

Expressing issues on Black Lives Matter through poetry On the oppressive ways arts organisations can use communities and small groups Not fully agreeing with the current Trans Debate and the intersectionality of it that is 'your either with us or against us' and not allowing an open dialogue That the art sector should provide an open and even controversial/conversation space is now polarising and going along out of fear of being labelled themselves.

Re funding successes as against others who might out at times.

When calling out online trolling and bullying of local musicians I had to deal with a lot of trolling myself.

Members of a local council based organisation objected to our satirical artwork about President Trump and demanded it's removal for being political.



All possible sorts of pressure typical for the Eastern European context here where I live and work.

As before.

A bit when writing about an ethnic group I was criticised for not

being in a position to do so.

A TV audition, where the director wanted me to produce the racial stereotype (caricature).

I have been criticized for demanding young performers to attend rehearsals and for 'singling out people' when giving director's notes. Also I have been stifled in show choices.

I don't wish to go into it. . . trying to deal with it artistically. By contravening a 'conventional' wisdom I risk hostility and possibly from my a valued group.

Criticism of our artistic program by an ACE relationship manager who never attended our events over several years.

Same person as I wrote about before. Generally I found my work didn't always fit the funders or the venues (that's a real problem!) but that's part of the scene. I have a positive attitude towards ACE unlike many.

Funding cut from council.

Political opinions even when NOT PARTY POLITICAL are open targets for trolling so less and less keen to do so on social media. It's design to reduce debate had been spectacular.

It is very difficult to exhibit works that deal with sensitive issues and goes beyond accepted narrative. I gave up creating works in 2012 as I found it impossible to find a place to exhibit those work. Being a curator of the festival I could have not exhibited within it as it was unethical. Recently I managed to exhibit in Denmark, but that is much freer country. The Police protects artists there.

My agent has made it clear to me that certain plots or characters would be unacceptable because they might be considered 'right wing'.

nothing personal but the Theatre is attacked on social media whenever we have a book event with someone who has expressed political or social views. We were also subject to a



campaign from the mother of a member of staff who was made redundant – we ignored her and she eventually stopped posting. I have been told to not book “political” events – so previous clients such as the People’s Assembly have been priced out of booking, since they were offered a discount rate in the past.

The politics of my work often receive criticism and protest from anti LGBTQ factions.

Gaslighting within the creative industry.

Critical/abusive tweets and FB posts from members of the public about events the organisation was running

Representing groups in the manner I felt they should be I have had work censored by funders.

the usual ‘Commie’ ‘Snowflake’ and even ‘Terrorist Lover’ for work centred around supporting the LGBT community or refugees and the abuse they receive.

I must tick the right boxes and keep all ticks within the box.

I am a 40+ female theatre-maker who does not accept that workplace bullying should be a standard part of theatre practice. Just by existing and breathing, I cause controversy. It is very gendered ageism now, and even when I was younger and standing up to bullying, it was hard. But it was necessary. It still is necessary. It now has a big layer of sexism and ageism on top of it, making it even more necessary, and I am regularly shocked at how badly behaved people will be to defend it.

I was CEO of a large producing and presenting organisation. When I joined, the venue

regularly booked Roy Chubby Brown, Kevin Bloody Wilson, Jim Davidson and their ilk. I immediately banned them all. I had a really unpleasant conversation with Jim’s agent who was really unhappy, and there was a bit of media backlash. Way before social media I am glad to say, this was nearly 20 years ago. One redtop headline read “NAME OF VENUE plonkers ban our Jim”. I’m very proud of that, it’s on my wall. I had some members of staff and volunteers, and audience members, and even board members, who objected to my decision. I told them I was not willing to give a platform to sexist racist homophobic disablist comedians, and if other venues in the town wanted to book them, they could go and see them there, but they would not see them on any stage that I was responsible for.

When developing the culture of an organisation to become more creative.

Making cross cultural work as a white man means I am always in danger of being labelled as appropriating, rather than sharing, exploring and celebrating inter cultural relationships and differences.

I was bullied by a colleague after being chosen for a certain job; it significantly affected my mental health and made me question every artistic action I took, even beyond that work. Board members can sometimes pressure arts organisations and their staff – who are usually over-delivering for available resources – to ‘do more’. The answer can’t always be delivering more when our labour is already undervalued. It’s difficult to articulate that without seeming to be work-shy, which is really not the case.

Programming work by black artist caused controversy.

Working with partners I often have to water down opinion in project writing and have had

to extract some religious references even when present in submitted writing. I usually air towards a positive spin on everything even though at times it does feel a bit doom and gloomy, I have been chastised by people in political roles of power when campaigning to save art resources, this is always a worry as it may have had a negative impact on my career. I was also once criticised by a leading Reverend of a local church when, trying to nurture inclusivity and acknowledge Diwali, we themed a lantern procession to feature Hindi Gods, didn't go down well and caused some upset.

Councillors expressing personal opinions in rude and offensive manners with no basis in true and a refusal to apologise when caught out. Lack of support from Board Members and councillors when the above happened. Offensive and threatening comments on social media as a result of a local councillor posting offensive and inflammatory remarks regarding decisions taken by myself and colleagues.

Social media harassment of a programme I used to run, by one of the participants. There was never a conversation about anything he was 'concerned about' but he happily posted (false) statements about the programme and the events ran as part of it, on social media, whipping up attention from other people. It was both stupid and anxiety inducing.

I faced criticism online of a studio space development on Facebook.

When I had a Twitter account, any controversial opinion would be met with the beginnings, the seeds of outrage – DMs, mentions. It was one of the major reasons that I removed my Twitter account – and, indeed, all of my social media accounts. The caustic, hypersensitive atmosphere shrouds understanding of the issues that underlie it, and makes being creatively free overly difficult.

As chairman of a music festival I agreed to the performance of a



more unusual work. This led to a letter and personal pressure from the chairman of a local charity to change the work. This was a man of influence and he tried to use this and his other board members and friends to get me to programme something by a well-known British composer instead. I resisted but there was a lot of ill feeling which persisted for a long time.

My work is not political, therefore I feel that there is no interest in it or place for it in people's programmes currently. There is a huge pressure towards artists to make urgent work that will save the world currently which I feel is unfair since they are under such financial duress.

The thought process and aims of the work challenged, criticism for not being political enough, or representation of people's views that differ to the work.

With one political piece, I felt unable to share publicly, and did so only briefly and limitedly in case there was any back lash. It was a subject that I felt very strongly about regarding our council's action but was worried any back-lash might have an effect on my business and client relationships as they all revied council funding.

Producing verbatim work that was considered controversial by some sections of the media and public.

Ironically it was in relation to a performance about women's rights – and we were told we had not addressed issues experienced by lesbian women correctly – when our cast included lesbian women, the research we had done included lesbian and trans women and drew on their experience.

This has been very small, but right wing criticism of a self definition of disability. This was on twitter.

The need to conform to get funding.



Being told by employers that I couldn't do or say certain things.

Made myself very unpopular with the classical music mafia at one time by adopting an eclectic approach to programming. Several wrote to ACE demanding my resignation before I'd even started my job, and then when I had they colluded with ACE to have me replaced by a more compliant person.

See previous Also felt pressure from local stakeholders (military and conservative local government) in a garrison town when producing an anti-war exhibition.

I faced huge criticism in person, online and from certain theatre buildings for making a show about working class white men and toxic masculinity. The producing venue pushed for ethnically diverse casting, when the piece was very specifically exploring British white working class toxic masculinity. I faced scrutiny for creating something with an all male cast, when my previous two productions had all female casts. One PR firm refused to take on the production on the basis of both of these things. I hasten to add that this production came in the wake of the Grayson Perry documentaries exploring exactly the same themes, and a big social media push from high profile individuals such as Professor Green raising awareness about the self-worth and future prospects of these young men in our country.

I became the subject of a custody case my drawings I had online and playful text were brought to bear. Plus the judge did not like me as I spoke out of turn. A well known barrister harassed me with soft porn photos of lesbians. I ended up thinking he was flirting. He knows numerous in the Arts industry so I persisted in sending him art work. Besides I often send art work as letters to people. I have resorted to that in desperation as

I cannot find a suitable place for my art here it is hell here. I gave him a lot of money and forgot to request a receipt. He now has slides of some revealing paintings I completed and were never accepted. I have had to move so often all I have left of my work is photos. I am under extreme pressure here it is awful. I am part Greek Cypriot part Anglo I cannot figure it out, my drawing and painting abilities are way above average I know that.

Felt under pressure to be seen to present "politically" and what is perceived as being "the right thing" (or left!).

A photo of a work in progress was posted on twitter – I felt it was pretty inoffensive, or at least rather fair comment, broadly about women being able to have affordable sanitary products, but some (mainly right-wing Tommy Robinson supporters from their profile photos) piled on the photo subjected me to some rather nasty bullying and disgusting (and weirdly totally unconnected to the work) anti-muslim trolling. Death threats (or at least hopes for me to die) and rape threats ensued. Lots of fairly nasty and weird jibes at my work/face/appearance. Was pretty horrible for a day or so.

A current project – in development for nearly 10 years – threatens to be stymied i.e. killed at source – purely on the grounds of belligerent cultural appropriation insinuations and new rules about what I – as a white female – am now allowed to depict or write about and what I'm not supposed to go anywhere near i.e. nothing except my direct personal experiences, although I wouldn't – as a fiction writer – expect quite as much flack if I were writing about a or some white men. The whole purpose of fiction writing/imaginative writing whether page stage or other is annihilated within these rules, as is the necessary faculty of imagination, empathy, and creative imagining Two strands to this

– some legitimate misgivings of my own – the expectation that this might be so much of a problem it isn't worth persevering with, which is a pity, as its purpose on the whole is totally on the side – if you need to see it like that – of the group(S) It's supposed to be representing, although comedy etc generally holds the potential for ambiguity, as well as the potential for misinterpretation. Interpretation being very much in the mind of the beholder, of course.

the organisation places pressure on the programme to be "uncontroversial" or at least to not "offend" and will react negatively or unsupportively should it receive even one negative comment.

Altering projects to 'meet boxes for funding' within my area.

I make work with young people and pressure from parents regarding content can be insidious or extreme, depending on the show.

Self censorship – we don't dare play Beethoven anymore because he was white and male.

Silent judgement on the quality (even though I know it's all subjective opinion).

I presented a play that deals with PTSD recovery from the point of view of the sufferer, literally putting the audience in the experience. Audiences are left with partial information. They are put through the experience of hallucinations caused by memory and unreliable narrators. The play is not advertised with the themes included as I wanted audiences not to avoid these discussions and the opportunity to see how terrifying it feels. Response has been fantastic especially by audiences. However, I felt gagged by my colleagues. I felt like as soon as I explained the ultimate aims there was a rush to plan for insult or offence. Little trust was put into the significant background research I had put into PTSD as a survivor and as a



dramatist. This was infuriating because it ate away at my confidence as a producer. It was only as auditioned possible actors who shared their own experiences that I felt solace. As in those meetings the communal hurt was felt. Many had gone into acting as a coping mechanism. Some chose to withdraw their application but were happy for the chat. That is what even embarking controversial work can do when planned correctly. Give solace to those suffering who may be later stakeholders.

Over the space of 2 years I created a community art installation, through extensive community engagement, to create a intricate and very large knitted poppy display to mark the centenary of the end of WW1. Roughly 8000 people across the borough were involved to knit 35000 poppies which resulted in a 38 piece display across the town hall behind the towns war memorial (I work in Culture as part of a borough council who own the theatre I work for). the display hosted the word 'They fell with their faces to the foe. Lest We Forget. 1914–1918, accompanied by a cascade of 35 poppies, all created from knitted poppies made by the community. The display was beautiful, and was predominantly well received. As we are a local public body, we are incredibly cautious about public facing work and all 'i's' are dotted and 't's' crossed. A lot of time and consideration was taken in the creation of the final design, which was contingent on how many poppies were finally reacted. Extensive planning permission was sort and obtained, as well as consultation with the Boroughs war memorial committee. However despite this, there was a local public backlash about the final display being 'Disrespectful', 'tasteless and tacky', 'a waste of public time and money', 'defacing a listed building' and my favourite 'fake news' by members of the public. complaints were lodged through official channels, as well as directly to me through Facebook and twitter as I had been mentioned/thanked for my involvement in the project as well as photo's I had shared myself online of the work. I received offensive private messages from 'friends of friends' online and much negative twitter trolling for the display. This was a massive shame. especially as the project has





gone on to win awards and was widely praised.

I was once told stridently and aggressively by a journalist that one of my exhibitions was not appropriate as it was seen to criticise the establishment I was subsequently not put forward for media representation by my organisation for several years.

Refused Arts Council funding because an officer attending one of my productions called out what she wrongly regarded as 'gratuitous sex' in a scene.

When I challenged a director and writer regarding the all male creative team, I felt intimidated to back down.

can't as this would identify me

see answer to earlier question. It was in relation to published research about funding policy and practice rather than any particular artistic production or promotion. Decades ago (during the period of excess trade union activity that ended up with Thatcher in 1979) I was under pressure and pilloried for 'strike breaking' for promoting a music festival that the local government trade union wanted to wreck for easy press coverage. It meant that I had to change certain events to some 'neutral' venues to preserve the festival and honour ticket purchasers.

Harsh criticism from other artists. They allegedly don't remember!

As described previously.

The person involved has since apologised. I experienced humiliation in putting together an exhibition from the gallery director curator who was dismissive of how

I was approaching the concept and the realisation of my work for the gallery. It was an experience that was deeply undermining and I would not want any other artist to suffer similarly. I am a mature artist maybe a younger or less assertive artist may not be equipped to deal with.

When presenting issues related to rights of women or taboo issues in the Palestinian community we get sometimes criticized for it. But usually we do not face a real prosecution or danger for doing so.

Been told by tutors that they don't understand my work without explanation Told I will be the worst in the class if I apply for a course (a friend of mine knew the tutor and was told directly by the tutor that the tutor had been deliberately mean because she didn't like me and was in a bad mood at the time). Have been told I was arrogant for even describing myself as an artist. (I had not said I was talented or brilliant. Just said I was an artist when asked what I do) Was told I was 'pathetic' in front of other students when I hadn't completed a small assignment when asked, even though it was before the deadline and others hadn't yet completed it and she was polite to them. I've been laughed at for simply being an artist by general public. critiqued for not expressing ethnic viewpoints strongly enough Told to just 'knock some stuff out' Told it's just a hobby Pressured into making crafts to sell to make money by the working tax credits.

Working with a transgender speaker and being targeted by a radical feminist lobby  
Being targeted by a feminist academic lobby for a programme

The pressure to show an edgy film in an arts complex I managed during a film festival



came from the artist producing the film. We compromised with a context warning before the screening.

When raising the need for a gender balance on a project I was forced to back down by the director and writer.

Recently trolled aggressively for putting forward a policy of encouraging women of colour in our field.

As a heterosexual male, questioning and representing male experience in contemporary society.

I have felt under pressure the second I open my mouth at an event or conference, because I don't speak with a middle class southern accent. People will often immediately switch off as I don't have the same code as them from the outset and they stop listening. It is only later when I speak in an open mic situation and they don't have a choice but to listen that the same people then try to approach me and have a conversation about something I have said. It is difficult to go into a situation and feel blocked before you have begun and then find the courage to speak out when you already feel judged. This is not paranoia – it happens at just about every arts event that I attend unless I already know people there.

I am sorry, I don't wish to discuss the exact events because they are too upsetting. However in another incident our organisation had to explain to a local university that we were 'Pro profanity but generally against artistic practice that was cruel or hateful to other individuals'. We were dropped and the word under discussion was 'chink' which was included in a poem under consideration and spoken by an unpleasant character being criticised by this piece. At the end of the poem he gets killed, cooked and eaten in a Chinese restaurant and that wasn't



criticised at all!

Political theatre is always under pressure.

Trustees unhappy with a non-normative approach to programming.

As above

Organisations would much rather have someone less outspoken about certain issues and reduce the amount of real debate rather than commit to a change via someone who wants to break ground in certain areas.

1. I was working on a show that had a trans woman character and spent two years casting the right person who had the necessary identity as well as being qualified for the job. That person pulled out at the last minute and I had to find a replacement that was politically acceptable and would not generate controversy or choose to cancel the show at huge financial loss. Subsequently, a trans performer was appointed who was not appropriately qualified as a performer. That person ultimately refused to learn lines, follow direction and bullied several female members of the team. When a complaint was made to her agent about the unprofessional behaviour, her agent responded that if she was fired from the production they would sue the company for transphobic discrimination and even if they lost, the controversy would ruin the company. 2. A colleague posted on Facebook that 'all the stupid bigoted breeders' singing along to Fairytale in New York at Christmas were perpetuating homophobia. I am LGBT and challenged this view, stating that the homophobic slurs in that song were clearly represented as being those of a vile person, not someone to admire and as such the song was in support of LGBT folks. The colleague maintained that even in this situation no slurs of any kind should ever be uttered in artistic narratives. For disagreeing, I was trolled across all my social media platforms for more than a week and had to block more than thirty people. Now I do not use Facebook at all and



twitter only sparingly as I am scared of this response.

Broadcasters in the arts have their own agenda and it's a London biased elite centric world view. Charities like BAFTA need to move out of London and represent the whole UK.

Bullying is subtle and covert.

Not to question a team members' insistence that pronouns be clarified on emails and on addressing people.

see previous answer above. Working much with children and young people, and trying to include them and their opinions within project development, can be an additional pressure to keep quiet. Despite the supposed acceptance of youth culture, it is the middle aged and often middle class (or better paid people) who make decisions and do so without wanting too much change. (This is reflected in the global current uprising of young and disadvantaged young people, who just feel they are not listened to.) Balancing this, especially when applying for project funding, is a delicate business. Funders have to be reassured that the project is under control.

The conservative management of many arts organisations and outlets embodies white privilege, therefore, anything that tackles that structure of power is seen as being difficult, not-proper, and therefore spat out.

I've felt under pressure to keep quiet and 'nod along' in discussions about politics in the workplace in television and publishing for many years, and more recently by the 'cancel culture' of social media. Often the latter comes about more from the cowardice and weakness of professional bodies such as broadcasters and publishers in the face of social

media activists.

Again, too long to go into. I think the moral outrage begins at art school however, and continues throughout your career.

**Q16 Please explain why you decided to change your artistic product, programming or plans due to this pressure?**

I decided to exhibit my works because I have already invest lots of money on that show. it was too late to change anything, I couldn't allow wasting my funding.

To break an impasse.

Please see previous question. In the end our brochure was not getting signed off, which was about to make us loose our printing slot and jeopardise the whole Marketing campaign, so we had to cave in after weeks of stand off.

Working in programming arts in a Christian church, they (the church goers) did not want the contemporary dance planned for a site specific commission.

I feared professional repercussion.

The effort to win the argument would have prevented us from doing it anyway.

Fear of being deliberately misinterpreted and categorised.

We felt obliged to program performances that were not relevant to our audience.

I felt I wouldn't get their support and thought too that maybe it would affect my relationship with ACE. It didn't!

Because of other people's jobs.



Decision taken out of my hands – told organisation (small, financial precarious) couldn't afford a potential backlash.

That's how it works – only certain things can be said/commissioned/argued. It's not worth the inevitable reaction or risk to your career if you don't toe the line.

Fear.

Work was not included.

I work with young people so have had to reign in a few ideas so that it would look like I had encouraged them to rebel.

Edited some content out of online writing and re-written blogs where necessary.

Because I like to please people overly, I think! And also because it seemed easier than fighting a battle that I did not want to fight, that I did not feel was warranted by my perspective on the subject. I would rather get on with making things.

I decided to make my work have more of a socio-political agenda in order to be more competitive.

its easier!

I can't do this without identifying details, but essentially because the risks of protest and costs of protecting people were to high for organisation to take on.

Presenting the white working class history of a white working class population in an overwhelming white working class location was considered by funders to not be sufficiently diverse.

Oblique requests to "tone it down".

To keep my job.

I had no choice. I had to fall in line with managerial decisions. Any attempts to defend my position fell on deaf ears. In the grand scheme of things I did not feel it was worth taking a stand. I did recognise the argument from the other side although ultimately disagreed with its tokenism and felt the situation was poorly managed.



I no longer publish my work.

The board felt it might jeopardise council opinion.

I'd like to produce work that – gets funded – gets paid for This has proved impossible in recent years – possibly because of the volume of those seeking support, possibly because previous work of mine has been deemed unsuitable/beyond the pale/inappropriate in some context or other or according to some slightly self-serving criteria.

The project I was implementing didn't fall under a 'category' for support so to help aid the project to be held in that area changed to suit them rather than what I devised.

We were going to build a new theatre, as our present one is no longer fit for purpose. after 5 years of planning and 11 million spent on it development, due to a small public outcry, small but loud protests and MANY personal attacks (physical and digital) to members of staff and council over the project, the theatre development has been abandoned.

unfortunately I have. It is a matter of picking battles. I sometimes have to weigh whether what I really need to say requires the element that will turn others away. If it is important to me, I will stick to my plan, but sometimes, it is not the most important thing and I choose to tame my ideas. I have felt like a traitor to my own self-expression, but I have to ask if anyone needs to hear from me at all?

Ordered to by direct Line Managers who were ambivalent about caving in to pressure.

If it didn't meet Arts Council requirements or agenda, there would be no chance of funding.

An executive staff member was not accepting of some programming ideas and refused financial support that programming decision.

see answer to Q 13.

I need working tax credits and have to try to make money. Getting funding is really difficult. No space or time for pure expression, lots of pressure from institutions to follow current trends No trend for sculptural furniture which is something I am drawn to. Too much categorisation around whether it's art or craft or furniture. Mostly it's about not having enough money to live on while I explore my art. And then struggling to find an outlet to sell it or store it.

I do not wish to discuss this.

The aforementioned play with the trans character was due to transfer to Boston. Following the difficulty casting and working with trans performers, it was decided to be too much of a reputational risk to continue the project in case something went wrong and the project was targeted by trans activists and the international transfer was cancelled.

It's 'fall in line' or lose the commission.

I didn't abort the project , I slowed it down over a longer development period , to allow funders – and audiences/participants – time to see how it worked and progressed, without being dangerous. (Slow burning fuse.)

For an easy life. Expressing the 'wrong' opinion marks you.

## Q18 Do you have any other comments about censorship or self-censorship in the arts & cultural sector?

Look at the Walker Arts Center's recent fiasco with the multi-million dollar Sam Durant gallows sculpture they supported and built. It was a folly beyond compare. Foolish from the word go. A public sculpture that was a full size execution gallows, supposedly "in remembrance of Native Americans executed," and yet they approved it and built it without doing a single moment of outreach to local native American leaders or constituencies!! Olga Viso, the Director on her own, simply chose the artist and the actual sculpture concept, and then proceed to fundraise and build it. Only later, when it was publicly unveiled, did the massive faeces hit the fan. Olga was fired, the sculptor completely assailed, and the sculpture itself was demolished by a native American Crew. If an entitled white person is going to do a "sculpture of conscience" about a "disadvantaged population or community", they had better talk with, and listen to, the living members of that community before proceeding. The Walker failed miserably, as did Durant. They all appeared clueless.

National events and moments are a great way to explore issues. Collective action and research underpins and gives credence to the sector. A shared approach helps move thinking on as can't get away from issues eg. women's suffrage.

Censorship is castration of the arts.



Diversity is often censored or pigeon holed into excepted ideas and norms.

It would be great to create guidelines for local authorities, about what is acceptable and what is abuse of power.

An artist I worked with recently was scared of intimidation due to

their anti-Brexit views expressed in a work and performance we hosted last month. This was due to seeing and feeling intimidation at an anti-Brexit march in London. Brexit will destroy their livelihood in the UK. The artist was scared of physical intimidation. We had to tailor publicity and the event accordingly. It was dumbed down.

Self censorship destroys the creative heart.

Local Councils need increased awareness, information and education relating to arts & cultural respectful censorship of artists' work and/or a cultural facilities' offerings which have been based on knowledge, training, experience and evaluation of community engagement activities etc.

I think the abuse of power in the arts sector should be monitored or criticized as much as in other sectors. With the precariousness of arts jobs in Mexico usually we accept below the line working conditions and mistreatment from bosses as we are in survival mode, economically speaking. Directors of organizations know this power and use it, they know no matter how low they go with work violence you will stay there as there is not a lot of options and you want a career in arts & culture.

The Arts world hides its conservative behaviour behind a mask of liberalism.

Safe theatre is boring theatre. Dynamic theatre is political. Theatre should challenge the status quo.

No.

I suggest considering the issue of censorship & self-censorship as an up-and-returning phenomenon of Europe as a whole. With governments becoming more populist, there is more and more censorship, but even worse is the self-censorship, that became bigger with the use of social media. Suggested reading: Freemuse, and research regarding the current state of censorship in Poland & Hungary.



Well – mute poetry of visual arts being in a distance from the words is sabotaged by artist talks, labels, explanations (beyond data), thus disabling the viewers freedom. Arts council's criteria for funding consider verbal argument above the aesthetic experience of the visible. Some intrusions from political correctness deform the conditions for freedom and act as censorship.

Yes. Many artists need to become jacks of all trades in order to make a living. Having a 'pure' creative output – whether you are a writer, actor, artist, filmmaker – it's not possible if you have to pay the rent. Like many artists I have juggled paid work with creative work – I feel that my portfolio is 'judged' as 'community art' – and that despite the fact that projects that I deliver create opportunities for other artists as well as generate significantly large audiences from all sectors of communities, that I am looked down upon as I just don't fit the profile. Hmmm – when – as the first person from my family to undertake a degree, I was asked to talk about my work in a group crit, I routinely talked – articulately and with passion, about what was wrong with the bit of work I was doing. Then I would watch – in amazement – when the other students – particularly the men it has to be said – extolled the virtues of their own work. 'But mine is better than theirs!' I would think, but not say. I was heartbroken when I got a 2.2. With hindsight, and looking at the portfolio I produced back then, I can honestly say that shouldn't have happened (and I did go on to win a bursary to do an MA some years later) – but as I didn't have that sense of entitledness, my own worth, and a decent education behind me at that stage. Artists self censor and self critique – those that don't perhaps are the ones who should be questioned.

The arts/sector is in such a powerful position to provide spaces/places intellectually/artistically and emotionally to hold a multitude of different creative expression and conversations that are opposite or disagreeing. I think artistically it can play a fantastic role to allow this to happen in an intelligent/process orientated way that will not allow a shut down but rather a consciousness raising process. People will say things that offend/hurt or are highly oppositional (unless it is deliberately offending/racist/homo/transphobic etc from a privileged point of view) but must nevertheless allow a process to occur of artistic evolvment, otherwise it becomes mono-cultural. I think the whole Brexit landscape we find ourselves in speaks of the different factions shouting at each other but not hearing or listening at all. We are in danger of finding ourselves with boring institutions that just churn out the same lazy arguments or use controversy to get social media/shock&awe hits, either is harmful. Please, please keep going in the change of leadership, different perspectives, experiences, narratives that is so very needed, it's a bit of dessert with the same institutions saying the same thing for years – because we are multiple not a single narrative/experience and as we evolve we change our minds and hearts we are now in a very very different 'dimension' where the arts has to catch up to respond and open some powerfully shut doors. To leave with a question "What would you do artistically or say to your funder, if your funding did not depend on it?"

No.

When we explore meaning and context we can decide if our work has any significant message which is appropriate to all audiences. I self censor. I would not want vulnerable people, children for example to see some of my work without interpretation or



safeguards in place, I collaborate with organisations and individuals to explore how we can expose people to controversial work to generate thought, discussion, positive action, knowing some of the things I do will result in revulsion, distaste, confusion, anger. This is intentional. When showing work I consider context. I have wondered if this is too controlling and counter productive but this process becomes part of the art – I believe we need to be confronted by difficult subjects, not insulated, to be aware but my work is partly driven by censorship. I have tried to make work that is uncensored, as part of the process of creation but I cannot, it is part of my cultural hinterland. I will be surprised if you can find any artist who is not influenced by censorship, if they explore their thinking it will be there somewhere, consciously or subconsciously – whether they or the organisation can admit it is the interesting question for me, and how they respond and why they do so. Can we create an environment which withstands censorship? First we have to explore what censorship is acceptable or unacceptable to us and consider why this is so. By picking our way through this minefield we decide whether we are being self-righteous or righteous as individuals, whether we need to feed ourselves in our artists garrets or whether we need the affirmation of funders.... whatever motivates our output as creatives and creative organisations in the cultural sector.

It is important to have a moral compass and act accordingly.

I have alluded to them earlier. Artists at the lower end of the spectrum (sell art works but can't make a living from it or perhaps do commercial work in order to afford a pot noodle) suffer as many issues from the sector itself as the establishment. The place where you maybe be sensitive to censorship is when you are showing in a location and some may find your image troubling for religious or ethical reasons. If there is no reasonable way to give forewarning then I would avoid



that. I self censor. Sometimes censorship is about appropriateness if it doesn't feel right to exhibit in a locale it probably isn't. I consider my art at times to be politically and socially expressive. Political and social views I have rarely found a problem, people may not like it. But usually if you do things with a good heart its not a problem. The biggest issue is always how the arts establish perceives its clientele especially as you go more regional or in tourist areas. They have an expectation of conformity.

In my view censorship and self-censorship in the arts and cultural sector come from problems in the way the arts are funded and delivered. Mainly it comes down to money. The strange thing is that often 'big bad' corporate sponsorship is far more liberating than Arts Council or other forms of grant funding which are hedged around with conditions and criteria, including a lot of informal constraints on what is approved and not approved by the funders. In general the sponsor is happy with bold and challenging arts content, as long as the quality is high. In contrast the grant-funded sector accepts low quality and conformist content all the time, as long as it ticks the boxes and fulfils the current objectives for the arts and culture, which often have nothing to do with artistic values. Sometimes sponsors can also be constraining and damaging to the integrity of a project, distorting the nature of the work presented. In my experience drinks brands are especially guilty of this, subordinating everything to their so-called 'brand values'. In my opinion the success of the arts is determined not by the quality of the artists (good artists are always available), but by the quality of the patrons and funders. The more cultured and enlightened the funders are, the more open, the more committed to free expression and innovation, the better the art.

I can give another example with a question attached. A few years ago, in my position as a Head of Arts, I started a gallery in an empty shop in the centre of a Northern town. The artist whose work was displayed first showed a nude portrait in the window. As a result



I was contacted by a BBC radio show who did a vox pop and interviewed me live. The vox pop interviews generally came down on the side of 'it doesn't offend me but some people might be offended so you shouldn't show it. The college insisted that a member of staff from the marketing department sat with me through the interview, reputation management. My feeling was, and remains, that the female depicted was fully aware of the artist's intentions for the work and participated in it as a creative partner (this is what she told me). The whole process highlighted to me that censorship is constant, the college reputation management, the public distancing themselves from decision making and stepping away from arguments, and potentially the artists deciding not to engage in making challenging images. My question is simply whether the arts sector reflects the general population in its particular prejudices, is it not just too middle class?

I adore irritating all of them 24/7 by insisting to express my opinion in an ever possible situation. Such fun, yumminess, and improves my beauty, health, youthfulness, sexualness, and of course, it boosts to an enormous extent the high quality of my ART.

We take an approach that artistic output should be accessible in terms of its themes/ language and interpretation. It needs to be relevant to audiences and it is these parameters that are our checks and balances – the work is for others and not for "us".

Please read some articles reported what happens in Japan, as well as other countries been suffered. [https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20191108\\_40/](https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20191108_40/),

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201911090027.html>, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/09/26/national/no-grants-art-festival-comfort-women/#.XdPY1f7TIU>

There needs to be a national set of criteria that protect artistic rights within the First Amendment to the Constitution.

I think that arts are a prism through which to view a story or emotion or reality, if it's done well and presented appropriately, with the intended and unintended audiences roundly considered then censorship from anywhere is damaging to the art.

Only that it is often unrecognised.

I have been struggling with and possibly self censoring over a couple of issues for some time, trying to resolve this artistically to prevent my work being misrepresented.

A sponsor, a large insurance firm once told me that they would not support anything homosexual. I replied so that rules out Britten then? Oh no we didn't mean him. Also can we let Mr Bloggs in accounts look at the script he's very big in the local amateur dramatic society. No of course not.

Any sort of censorship, contemporary or historical should not take place. Statues of controversial figures should remain where they are but with a placard of information detailing their misdemeanours. My appreciation of Lucien Freud's work has diminished since I found out how badly he treated women but that doesn't mean I want his work banned or his exhibitions boycotted.

No.

No.

I think we need more discourse in order to have the confidence and insight to keep pushing our boundaries.

No.

It's inevitable for survival in Austerity era that artists and creative practitioners have to follow the money if they want to eat.

It's harmful to our infrastructure, how we do things, and who does it. We have a mono-cultural workforce these days, and I wouldn't get a foot in the door in the sector these days. It bothers me that if I go to local or even national events, I will just see the same people, faces and hear the same voices and safe views – to the extent that I prefer to stay in and do something else. I realise it creates a vicious circle by opting out and we now see group think everywhere. FGS, this is the arts – are we not supposed to reflect the diversity and variety of human endeavour, creativity, ingenuity and talent? Are we not supposed to reflect, provoke and question? If we're not doing that as a sector – policy-makers, boards, managers – then it suggests to me that the management/corporate tail is now wagging the dog. I work with very small groups, individuals who come together, where the thinking is free and it can be tough, sometimes, compromising and working in different ways, but it has a greater impact for those making it, presenting it, participating and enjoying it. I find larger organisations stifling, stagnant, largely speaking and if I am lucky enough to work on something innovative within a

larger organisation, more often than not it is a one-off because the commissioning individual will soon move on to an organisation where they can achieve more. Not good for Creative UK's global competitive future, because we're not keeping up. All the organisations self-censor, including CIF and ACE. We've become



timid, frit subsidy junkies on the whole and the revolving doors between organisations and funders don't help.

This is a societal issue and various factors affect it. The greatest factor though is financial stability. The Arts Council should have a long look at where its money is going. I just witnessed a £1/2m bid that once broken down had no more than £50k of it going to artists pockets. The rest was on Directors, PR and all sorts of other crap. I'd suggest a breakdown of the arts budget into two figures. 1. Money for artists wages. 2. All other stuff. I am quite sure to see this would blow your mind as to how little artists actually get. If you want artists to speak their minds then make it possible for them to do so.

We need to work together to support artists creating exciting works about the subjects they deeply care about.

Our arts, culture, and indeed education sectors are supposed to be fearlessly free-thinking and open to a wide range of challenging views. However, they are now dominated by a monolithic politically correct class (mostly of privileged white middle class people, by the way), who impose their intolerant views across those sectors. This is driving people who disagree away, risks increasing support for the very things this culturally dominant class professes to stand against, and is slowly destroying our society and culture from the inside.

The problem is that most Arts venues in the UK are either entirely dependent on arts funding or are owned by a multinational business. Self-censorship is inevitable in these circumstances.

I am pleased to say that I think the arts in this country and usually a beacon of self expression in a world where the opposite is often true. We have moved a very long way since the days of Mary Whitehouse and Malcom Mggeridge (although in some ways those were the most exciting of times!).



There is a lot of art content I would like to put out there but I won't, for fear of repercussions and impact on my art, career, family and future funding.

The Overton Window is narrow at the moment on both sides of politics. These are strange times.

Arts policy reflects government policy.

I very rarely post anything online in a personal capacity. In my organisation we have clear guidelines on appropriate use of social media.

The questionnaire has made me want to look at my stance and whether there have been times when I've self censored. An interesting exercise.

As we know, censorship in artistic practice goes back millennia – and for good reason. Creative expression worthy of the name involves risk, whilst political management seeks to contain or to manipulate the production of risk. There should never be a gentleman's agreement between the two.

I am not re-aligning any part of my practice or product around the insecurities of an arrogant young man. But in the regions particularly, there are a lot of arrogant young men who are expecting me to, whether they can articulate that to themselves or not.

Consistency is hard – we do tend to allow left wing 'extreme' views more artistic leeway than 'equivalent' right wing views and I want to keep it that way but I am aware of the logical inconsistency!

There can be personal consequences to making a stand – and it is very difficult to measure

the impact or scope of this in these febrile times.

Why did you ask about right wing views? Why not ask about far left views too or about religious intolerance etc?

I think that self-censorship happens a lot. I think that it would be interesting to have the responses to a survey like this broken down in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability etc as I believe that these will impact how we respond to criticism – perhaps particularly on social media. Women and minorities are especially prone to discriminatory trolling, so there may be more self-censorship within their groups. The arts infrastructure (along with most others) has been set up by a particular group of like-minded people and the rules suit them. Everything else is seen as 'other' to their 'normative' values, but every group of people is subjective in reality. Just because white middle-class people are in charge, does not make their experiences universal. We need to challenge assumptions and sometimes that is by being controversial. Things cannot be innovative if we are all constantly toeing an invisible line. We also need to accept that it is okay for people to disagree with us and that sometimes someone will say something that you consider stupid or offensive. That does not necessarily mean that the person who said it is a bad person, and they certainly should not be ostracised forever for saying something that you do not agree with.

It's great that this survey is happening it has been on mind for a while, I naturally censor my opinion but also do this in every day life. I feel my role is one of facilitating conversation and sometimes opinion creates a barrier to audiences and communities. Impartiality allows artists to work and facilitate in all communities and is an important part of our practice I feel opinion can be shared after relationships have been formed – a

soft approach. I think it is important that we can discuss opinions regarding the sector within which we are working and share feedback with lead organisations without reprisal and perhaps in the safety of anonymity. A neutral voice offers solace to all and a rest from divisive politics, I see no benefit to discussing the politics of today for many of the people I work with at the bottom of the pile struggling to live day to day and suffering the true impact of decisions made in parliament. In these settings politics is an abstract concept and one of which few can afford to spend the time and energy obsessing over; for many political opinion is outside of day to day survival.

Any arts organisation or performers who seek funding from local government, sponsors or arts funders must self-censor in order to achieve it.

Creativity should never be censored, stopped, demoted and should be encouraged to be made important in our education establishments for all ours sakes, especially our young people, all our young people. Fight for the Arts in education! Expression for ALL. Society depends on it x.

The modern, new places – Vagina Museum, Museum of Youth Culture – will end up dominating all of the traditional institutions in terms of acquiring new audiences because they are run by young modern Directors unafraid to take risks.

Lack of general professionalism and formalised HR/whistleblowing/reference processes are problems that perpetuate censorship. The industry is such a small world that you're constantly in fear of putting a foot wrong.



Until there is far more diversity on the boards of cultural organisations, we are going to continue to be subjected to censorship and self censorship. Funding also plays a huge part – organisations feel they cannot take risks and lose grants

and audiences. If the sector was better funded, there would be less fear of being risky in performance and development.

No.

None.

I think we urgently need public debates in some of these areas to try to see if there is any sort of consensus in what are very polarised views. I think some of our funders also need to be part of the debate and not to sit on the fence – organisations need support to know that they will not be penalised for expressing particular views.

This is a very timely survey – I look forward to reading the results. Thank you.

I think the idea of 'speaking out' needs to be carefully defined. There was wide spread confusion in the arts at the outcome of the Referendum for example, and I would suggest that this was because many in the arts realised that large sections of their audience did not share their (our) world view. Similarly there has been much work lately about climate change – a valid subject of course , but there is a point where people will feel they are being lectured by the arts and this could be counterproductive – just like the 'well its ok for you , you flew in' accusations that have happened. That's where the arts need to be careful not to turn into a bunch of pontificating self righteous judgemental pillocks.

I think I've said my piece as a tiny fish in a big pond!

Funders and sponsors – also venues and producers have a responsibility to stand with artists under the kinds of pressures mentioned in the survey.

The circumstances are always different there is no black and white and its notable that people on the left will always challenge opinion and suggestion that does not comply with theirs.





No.

I think we need to be careful not to confuse censorship with social stigmatisation. If someone states an opinion publicly, it is their right to do so. But there are consequences to public actions. And public actions – either live or through digital means – are a choice. The right to disagree (even in bad taste) is also a choice which has consequences. When looking at governments and historic periods where censorship is/was fully in place, the ramifications were completely different. We just need to be careful when we use such strong wording, without fully acknowledging their meanings.

Self censorship is often more limiting than censorship from external influences, the fear of giving offence is given too much emphasis. The most innovative and creative art is rooted in pushing boundaries of what is acceptable.

Artists have a duty to challenge convention, ideas, process and politics. I see no harm in this as long as nobody is harmed or offended by the ways in which this is done.

The main censorship which will last for a generation is the de facto banning of the arts in state schools in England. The arts are reduced to their Macdonald's equivalent of musicals if tolerated at all. In order for the cultural sector to flourish this must be addressed and funding must be restored so that arts organizations can afford to take risks.

Important to look at the nature of so called networks in the arts and cultural sector. That's really where issues to do with who can say what are policed through collusion and peer pressure. Good luck with the survey – timely!

I cannot take the discrimination any longer, I think it might be religious as people here

think I am Jewish, when I bring that up they say oh we don't but as it is often people from a quite anglo or catholic background that is best I can come up with. I do not know what to do about the National Art School – to say my work was unsophisticated although that sounds bad to anybody else is simply not a critique, that makes me sound like an amateur you might see for sale in a tourist town of the local scenery or badly thought out nude. It was disgusting and for me I am sensitive so cruel. Many of my peers in the past have commented on my abilities but I am crushed, photo realism pleases the masses here that is all they know plus some pseudo conceptual art.

Yes – I have worked with council-run venues who are really cautious about what work they programme, and have really, really worried about working with me because I am 'political'. They are worried things might be 'too feminist' or might upset the conservative councillors who might come to the venue just by dint of being employed by the venue. Which is a real shame and testament to our strange culture of fear – the venues are worried about their changing funding landscape, just as we artists are.

I think it's timely that the issue is being raised; but to be of use it has to presume censorship can operate from the left or right of the spectrum. From my own experience, I feel that thirty years ago those on the right were quickest to condemn, now it's those on the left. I also think that many critics have lost the common touch (and popular platforms) & so find it harder to take a public 'cross-party' position on censorship. The arts world is top heavy with administrators and this tends to bring politics – the interests of large groups of people – into areas of art that are best left alone. Funding and grants are just the more obvious things that are affected, of a long list. For what it's worth, I personally



moved from a mixed market view of arts funding to a much more free market view, and I'm sceptical about the motives (and results) for any arts funding that is not paid for and developed at a very, very local level. I don't like the phrase 'cultural sector' – why a "sector"? A bureaucratic perspective. An artist, as an artist, is not part of an administered sector: he/she is a free individual or group of individuals seeking to speak to individuals, free or otherwise. If you put art with political content in the market place people can take it or leave it. And I reckon that's where the politics are likely to be at their clearest; whereas 'administered' art by paid, politicized professionals must be a very shifty thing.

I find the current state of affairs with all of this very depressing. The public sphere and the political situation is a complete bear pit where some people – and especially women it seems – are terrorised into silence or removing themselves from public facing portals for fear of abuse from various factions – often from people who just enjoy abusing women from a position of anonymity. Meanwhile the arts sector treads a very delicate path in only legitimising points of view that are considered already acceptable. I agree that if you are directly dealing with – say – work in schools or with young people – some standards of decency should be maintained and encouraged at all costs. I don't think this should assume the status of law, almost, when dealing with work by and for adults. Yet having said that I would add I am no particular fan of work that sets out to offend or horrify merely for the purpose of creating a robust publicity campaign, or targeting the already weak just for the sake of it.



Being a writer and trying to make sure you don't offend anyone is really difficult. There are a thousand ways you can accidentally get things wrong, bring shame on yourself, and put your whole career in jeopardy. I do think writers have a responsibility to make an effort to get things right – to create characters

that aren't offensive in whatever way – for example, to properly research what life is like for someone with obsessive compulsive disorder if you're writing a character with that disorder. But there are always people who don't yet know that they have that responsibility – writers starting out on their career or who just haven't come across that particular form of discrimination yet. They get it wrong. Should they be shamed? I don't think so. I think they should be informed – with empathy, with generosity, with good humour. They'll feel bad and embarrassed enough without being trolled on Twitter for whatever they've got wrong. It seems crazy to me to blame individuals in this way – individuals who are just trying their best. If something is published that is unintentionally offensive, it would be more appropriate for the publisher to be held to account, if anyone, since I think it should be part of their role to guide writers and check for that kind of thing. But even then, it doesn't seem very helpful to demonise and vilify.

Self censorship is generally a bad idea. Keep speaking out until someone sticks a gun to your head and then just think about it.

Artists need freedom and trust. This is profoundly lacking on an island whose baseline values have been fundamentally conditioned by a protestant/Methodist/Presbyterian culture which prioritises utilitarianism over celebration, which prioritises iconoclasm over continuity... And you, the reader of this, are you challenged by that statement? Are you unwittingly viewing the world through an unquestioned protestant gaze?

The Artists Union England needs to become more prominent so that the collective voice made up of individual visual artists can be heard and make an impact on how public and private funding is distributed fairly.

With my experience of working on radio, film, and theatre, you need to respect how the directors want their events to be publicised, and it depends on how well you know them outside of work that you can get an idea on what will or won't please them. But personal



social media feeds are personal to you and should reflect what you think of a past project or how you want to spin on upcoming events.

Social media has killed any right to a personal opinion, whether that's from an audience or fellow workers. The only way to address contentious issues now is by doing them anonymously.

No.

It shouldn't be a thing and we should all feel free to express our art and/culture in a celebrated and open way.

I don't feel under huge amounts of pressure to self-censor, but I'm in a fairly privileged position. Though female and a freelancer, and I've had my fair share of struggles, I'm white and doing reasonably well so I don't feel powerless most of the time. Most of the topics I care about are not deeply controversial, just a bit ignored. And I have to say that, in my experience as a script reader for a new writing theatre, the people that generally want to make 'controversial' work tend to be men in deeply privileged positions trying to show violence against women onstage, generally of a sexual nature. If they feel repressed then that's ok by me. I have also been on the opposite side of this, when an actor started publicly making unpleasant (and proven to be untrue) allegations about fellow actors and as the play's director I had to be involved in trying to stop it from happening. If that actor was answering this survey she would no doubt say she has been 'gagged' – and she was, but that's because, for whatever reason, she was not telling the truth. I have also been 'gagged' in this case, in that I won't publicly say her name or try to prejudice her from

getting other work just because she behaved so strangely on this occasion. So I think this works both ways: we all need to treat each other with respect – surely this works in all aspects of life? Sometimes that means not slagging each other off. Where there are clear examples of prejudice, sexism / harassment, racism, etc, then of course people must feel able to speak out, and if they do not then that is deeply concerning. But in other cases, I'm not so sure. For instance, sometimes I might feel cross about the Arts Council, because they've not funded something close to my heart, but I'm not going to talk about it publicly because (a) that would be unwise and (b) I don't know what pressure they're under so perhaps it would be unfair of me. Social media is both helpful and unhelpful here. I've found the work of Victoria Sadler in charting numbers of female writers in major London theatres very helpful – she works outside of the industry so her comments won't affect her career. But there is a culture of 'ranting' on twitter about the theatre industry – usually by people starting out and frustrated that they're not doing as well as they think they should be – that sometimes makes me feel very depressed. I know it's just people trying to get things off their chest. But it's not for me.

Art and culture reflects society at the time of its creation. As artists, self-censorship is doing society a disservice.

Access to funders reports should be made more public and more prominent.

Censorship goes against democratic rights; it impoverishes debate, creativity and artistic production, and in doing so impoverishes society.

We either have free speech or we don't. If it is regulated, ask yourself, who does the

regulating?

The lack of transparency of many arts organisations mitigates against freedom of expression. This lack of and fear of challenge leads them to appoint people like them, working directly against promoting diversity. ACE is one of the biggest offenders with Boards full of people who receive funding from them.

Not except that in my experience artists are often pragmatic people and that there is nothing unusual in artists taking their market's preferences into account when making artistic decisions. You could call that a kind of "self-censorship" in some cases, "getting orders in" in other cases. Where employees are concerned, I suspect that normal rules apply re talking to the press, undermining your management etc. Creative artists are very often, admirably, people of principle which is part of what you expect. But I do not think we should try to imagine the cultural sector as one where ideology and high principle always govern debate and decision-making. The Romantic period is over and has been for some time.

It ushers in a dark age – and come to think of it, I've even been picked up on the use of the word 'dark'. What are we coming to?

Basically self censorship is wrong but sometimes timidity can be an issue is the artist or organisation is unsure, so more research into the subject matter may be required to have a credible currency in the proposal and outcome. Censorship by the state, organisations and institutions is wrong on every level unless it involves minors or the vulnerable but then there is always another side of the story so I refer back to my previous comment about credible currency.

There needs to more diversity on boards and less local



government staff.

To recap: it is a huge mistake to have one organisation, riddled with vested interests, having control of distributing both Treasury and Lottery funding. This was openly pointed out to the Conservative government when the Lottery came in, but ignored. The same official in the government department responsible ('Department of National Heritage') at that time refused to engage with the reasoning – and subsequently became chief executive of ACE! This complete ACE monopoly, coupled with the DCMS's opaque grant making process to 'national' institutions means that the system is far from open or competitive, which inevitably results in a prevailing climate of self-censorship and apparent compliance with questionable practice.

No, thank you.

Social media and relentless open space events create a culture of conversation that doesn't really go anywhere meaningful because these spaces are made to raise issues but not address them. So if you raise something in such a space, you have no time or support to unpack what is meant and have a meaningful debate. It's just amplification of opinion and not problem solving. Problem solving is too messy for these spaces. This is usually done in private. That's not what arts engaging with civics should look like.

Better not.

The sector is prone to liberal middle-class guilt.

Well usually we feel a bit cautious about our opinions on issues related to the Boycott Campaign against Israeli Occupation as we might be imprisoned or even withdrawal of funds by donors. Sometimes using certain names or terms or even choosing a location that the EU for example refuse to allow us to use for our events.

No. But it needs to change.



It seems to me to be about one's ability to network, fit a criteria and sit neatly into a box in order to get anywhere in the art field. I feel isolated and frustrated. I have recently lost my cheap (that was still a struggle to afford) studio space due to gentrification of the creative area that my studio was in.

Now more than ever we need to feel safe to explore ideas and themes that people may find uncomfortable. Art has always been about risk taking; the best work comes from those who are unafraid to start a dialogue that may sit at odds with some. We need to feel that our views are respected by those who are in a position of creative authority, be they funders, sponsors or cultural organisations. If we are to feel free to present daring work then we need to know that we are supported and respected as creative voices.

No.

Please let's be bold again!

It is always there in one form or another – and how you individually respond is very important – regardless of what group or organisation you might be associated with. It always boils down to the individual response – and putting your name on the line – taking the risk.

I think there's a danger of double standards, and leaping on a bandwagon, and allowing ourselves to be unfairly treated in the court of public opinion. I would bet that there's a significant amount of fundraised income that couldn't truly be described as impeccably clean – individuals who are domiciled offshore for tax purposes, banks who invest in quoted companies that are morally dubious (arms/weapons manufacturers etc like BAE

systems), donors who invest in 'tax efficient' structures to protect their wealth, meaning our country has less money for education, for roads, for the NHS. These are all morally tricky, but we mostly turn a blind eye to these. It's the major contentious donors who we shy away from (Sackler, BP, Shell, JTI tobacco) – but ultimately is there a strong moral difference between these organisations and, say, private donors who are under the radar but nonetheless contribute little to the country because of how they protect their wealth? Arts organisations would probably not accept funding from BP without careful thought, yet we'd happily shout out about a 5 star review of our production that was in the Mail or Telegraph (both owned by people domiciled overseas, who pay little tax, and in the case of the Mail have an equally corrosive impact on the country as fossil fuel companies have).

Just glad that you're doing this....

No.

In England the culture of the sector feels very controlled and I think this is connected to monopolisation by ACE. There is a strong feeling of 'not biting the hand that feeds' understandably because all but the most established are so vulnerable to losing support. Issues get repackaged into palatable soundbites that give the impression of solutions and progress but aren't really when you dig deeper. Even disruption seems to be controlled. Things are still siloed and conversations happening within marginalised groups stay just that.

The arts is about expression. Just because we're involved in the administration of the sector doesn't mean we shouldn't be able to express ourselves.

No.

No.

A fair funding structure with proportionate employment and wide choices of work would relieve pressures and enhance choice for practitioners/artists. See Equity doc.

Not really, sorry.

I've said my piece!

For reference – I work in cultural masterplanning and design of cultural buildings.

My concern is more that arts organisations and artists who do present challenging work, despite their best efforts to reach out are often seen to be elitist and out of touch with popular opinion and/ or playing to a small coterie audience. It is more difficult to create challenging work for large scale mainstream audiences.

The instrumentalist funding narrative exacerbates censorship as there's no place to challenge the prevailing cultural values system.

The sector needs a serious shake up. It constantly strives to be diverse and inclusive but is still driven by the same old white, middle class, politically correct elite. It's time for different voices to be heard even if that is hard to hear or challenging to those in power.

The institutional bullying culture embedded within the sector needs to be rooted out and a more tolerant middle ground need to be found where everyone feels empowered to be heard and have their say. This along with a more diverse workforce (meaning all sectors of society are represented) is the only way that we start to see real change. Censorship remains a big issue in a sector that apparently thrives through artistic endeavour and creative freedoms. This is creative freedom



that is controlled by the 'rules' and tick boxes of funders, CEOs and artists that play by those rules. Let's have some honest open debate for a change!!

Even though I am of mixed heritage, working class, gay and live with a hidden disability – I present as white, middle class and middle aged and because of that, I recognise that I need to be ever mindful of the way I present and if I do elect to comment that whatever I might want to say will be seen on the basis of how I present and not who I actually am.

Let's move on and create an arts sector that represents the broader view of our society?

I do think it's a real issue and well worth exploring.

Yes, I keep my mouth shut 99% of the time, and it's getting very stressful. So much so, that I have no intention of finishing my 30-year career in the arts anywhere near a theatre or arts organisation.

Self-censorship, for freelances and solo workers, can be a depressing thing to deal with and may contribute to mental health problems. It may also be the means of talking oneself out of doing something which is too risky, too bold, too controversial – and the consequences of stepping over the 'safe' line.

This is not a good time for those who regard themselves as primarily professional artists.

This is an issue because the governance of arts organisation is too white, British-only, & middle class and everything that is not understood within their parameters are considered dangerous or are exoticised. There is a lack of cultural & backgrounds understanding within organisations/arts press' managements so a huge change in their teams is a necessary step to change our sector in a positive, inclusive way. PoC, disabled people, trans, women, non-binary people, migrants to the front!

Everyone knows it goes on, well done for trying to quantify it.





In large part, the orthodox position of the arts sector on a number of issues is self-reinforcing, a general cultural outlook which reflects the particular cultural and political constituencies which have tended to gravitate towards the arts, and which become concentrated there. At a time where open discussion and debate of cultural and political issues is sorely needed, the opposite tendency has become dominant in the arts: an us-and-them attitude in which constituencies form themselves around the reaffirmation of shared consensus positions on certain issues, and who react with hostility to the perceived threat of dissent among members of what are identified as the 'arts community'. For individuals who think differently or questioningly about the current state of affairs in society, culture or politics, it becomes a risky business to express opinions which go beyond the pale of this increasingly narrow consensus. It is also important to note that individuals cannot rely on any support from institutions, whether these are arts organisations or academic institutions, which are often anxious to avoid being caught up in 'bad publicity', or are often tacitly favorable to the consensus opinion, and will often give short shrift to policies of internal review, mediation or redress. Given the prevalence of precarious employment forms in the arts – sessional teaching contracts, freelance work and project-based fees, along with low-pay and limited opportunities – arts workers, particularly artists and academics, are vulnerable to reputational smears, ad hominem attacks, rumour-mongering, particularly through social media, which threaten their income and livelihood. Future employers, arts organisations and commissioning agencies fear adverse publicity adhering to individuals already pursued, and become averse to engaging these individuals subsequently. These workers, unlike contracted staff, also have few statutory employment protections, and little recourse to formal procedures for redress of grievances

with those organisations that engage them. This poisonous culture has had a severe effect on individual artists, academics and media workers' confidence in expressing unpopular opinions.

I distrust the professional arts sector and prefer to work in non-designated art spaces now.

It's a growing problem glad you are looking into it.

Please have a read of my writings: <https://authory.com/ManickGovinda?collection=Free-Expression>





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