

### WHAT IS ART?

### WHO IS ART FOR?

#### WHAT DOES THE TERM ART MEAN TO YOU?



Jahzel Newell-Marshall Bank Holiday Broadcast

**Image credit: Andy Stagg** 

For me, creative expression is being free to explore our identities and environments with no boundaries.

When I first started working at the South London Gallery, this became a new world for me to explore. I was able to gain a greater understanding of contemporary arts and appreciate all the talented artists collaborating with the SLG.

I've always had a passion to be creative and work with children and families. Being part of the SLG's Art & Play team has opened my horizons to arts education. This resource is inspired by the people we work with and the paths they have taken in order to achieve their creative goals, as well as the many routes into the arts and creative industries today.

Decoding Approaches to Contemporary Arts showcases a variety of talented artists, writers, artist educators, and creatives, who have shared with us their journeys to reveal just how important a rich and diverse creative culture is.

### LANGUID HANDS



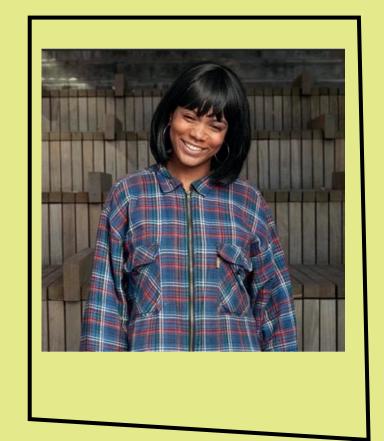
We travelled to Cubitt, an artist run space in Islington, London, to interview curators Languid Hands about what drives their work and to see their current exhibition.

### **LANGUID HANDS**

Languid Hands is a London-based artistic and curatorial collaboration between DJ, filmmaker and curator Rabz Lansiquot, and writer, facilitator and live art practitioner Imani Robinson. They began collaborating in 2015 and are currently Curatorial Fellows 2020/21 at Cubitt, an artist run cooperative based in Islington, London.

# SHANICE MEARS

We invited Shanice Mears, Head of Talent and co-founder of inclusive marketing agency The Elephant Room to tell us about her role, her inspirations, and overcoming challenges.





#### Can you introduce yourself?

I am Shanice Mears, co-founder of the creative agency The Elephant Room, where I am Head of Talent. As a young Black female operating within the world of advertising and media, I aim to be an example of leadership, value and self-truth. I see my role as a bridge between creative opportunities, people, brands and organisations.



# CREATIVE MARKETING SHANICE MEARS

### How did you start your career in creative digital marketing and advertising?

I participated in an industry internship programme called Digify. We were all picked by different agencies and then I was chosen to go to an agency called Iris Worldwide where I spent 10 months. I developed a great relationship with the former CEO, Dan Saxby, and it became a sort of co-mentoring between us. We then decided to leave, and start The Elephant Room. The Elephant Room is now four years old, and I am Head of Talent.

#### What are your inspirations?

I look to lots of different things and people for inspiration. I am inspired by the things around me things like music, fashion and even campaigns I see - sometimes I think, 'I wish I'd done that!' But most of all I think I'm inspired by my peers. I'm always so blown away by what my peers have achieved, and the way people younger than me have shown what they can do. From building studios and offices, to making music - I hear them on my Spotify playlist - I think inspiration comes in all different forms for me, definitely.

# CREATIVE MARKETING SHANICE MEARS

How do you support individuals to network and access opportunities into the marketing and advertising industry?

I try and do lots of different things to support and extend my expertise to people who would like to get into the creative industries. I almost feel like it's just my every day. I created The Guestlist, which is our network of over 1500 people sharing opportunities daily; I sit on the board of some organisations (which means being able to add my voice to the leadership of that organisation), because I feel like there are a lack of marginalised voices in that senior, strategic space. I decided to lecture (I'm a guest lecturer at Kingston University), because I think that there's an advice gap for young people in higher education and the industry. I am also a mentor, which I hope helps too.



# SHANICE MEARS



#### What's your attitude to overcoming challenges faced in your role?

I feel like I'm quite a resilient person and I'd be lying if I said I don't love a challenge. The role I'm in is a very autonomous one – I have lots of independence and make my own decisions in this role, so in a way, I don't always feel like it's even fair to share the challenges I face in this position. But whatever level you're at, challenges come at different times, in different circumstances, and at different points within our career. When I come up against challenges, a lot of the time it's the conversation I have with myself that gets me by. Ultimately, I ask myself, what am I learning from this? And if something has been difficult to deal with, how can I make sure something like that just doesn't happen again?

# CREATIVE MARKETING SHANICE MEARS

#### Can you tell us how you feel as a young Black Women in your role?

I feel a lot of things - sometimes shocked, proud, honoured, but most of all I'm so thankful. I've become more aware of who I am as a person and aware of my identity, when I'm constantly in places where people do not look like me. I feel like I sort of have a responsibility to make sure that Black women and individuals are championed and empowered. I like the fact that we are seeing movement and progression, because it means that people are paying attention. But I think it's important to establish our voice, explore how to use it, and not feel like we're being given permission but instead we are given space.

# CREATIVE MARKETING SHANICE MEARS

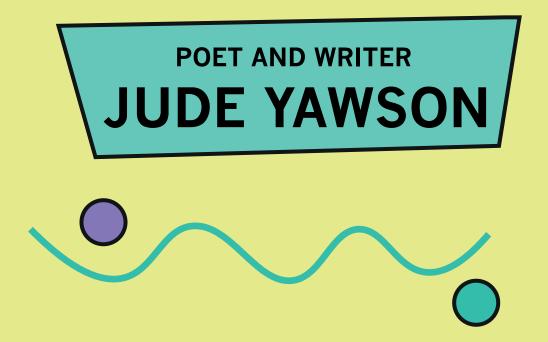
### Can young people take their existing skills in managing their social media into the professional sphere?

Young people entering the industry sometimes need help articulating their skillset, or testing their ideas on social media in a professional environment. Often the technology is not new or unnatural to them, it's just not something they have not done in the professional realm before. I think social media is a tricky one, because in interviews or chats some industry individuals ask you what is your social media, just purely because they want to know your followers, numbers and stats. But some might want to hear more about what it is you feel is important to you, and how you try to share that on your socials. I'd advise to just do what you feel is comfortable and comes natural to you. Build your network on different platforms, but remember this is about organically building your presence and learning about the types of people you want to connect with long term. Stay true to you while keeping an eye on the latest developments.

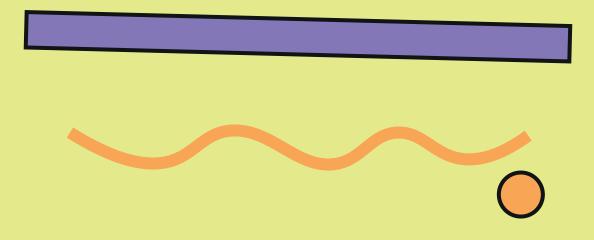




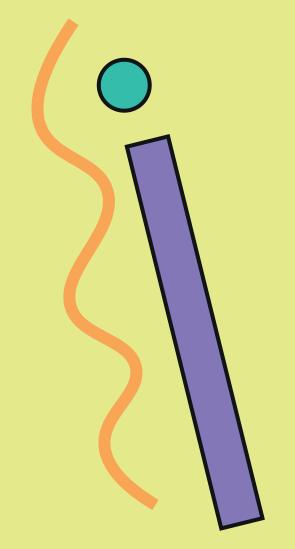
Writer and poet Jude Yawson explains how writing and performance poetry led to his career, his first novel, and tells us who inspires him right now.



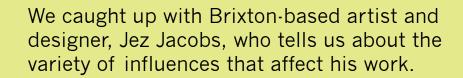
Jude Yawson graduated in BA Philosophy and MA Cultural Studies. He is a writer of articles, essays, poetry and film reviews. He co-wrote and edited Rise Up: The #Merky Story So Far with Stormzy and the Merky team, and is currently working on his debut novel. He blogs at House of Horous.



# JEZ JACOBS







# JEZ JACOBS

#### Can you introduce yourself and your creative practise?



I am Jez Jacobs, born in South London and I work from the Warrior Studios, Brixton. I studied fine art sculpture at Central Saint Martins, London, and have a background in graphic and multi-media design and working with young people. I work across media, with hints of social commentary through recurring images and references associated with lifestyle, street and youth culture. I explore movement, space and travel, and use characters and elements to orchestrate narratives and observations.

#### How has the art world shaped your perceptions and artistic approaches?

The artworld led me to meeting diverse sets of people, exposing me to many different art forms and practices, and working in professional creative environments. That has encouraged me to create work, through various medias and place them in various environments. I have created sculptures and paste-ups, created work for street locations, produced t-shirts, bespoke furniture designs and exhibited within education environments.

# ARTIST AND DESIGNER JEZ JACOBS

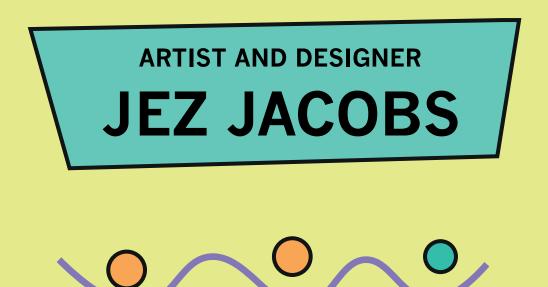
#### Who is your inspiration, where do you find inspiration?

My inspiration evolves constantly. I'm inspired by numerous established, current and unknown creatives working within diverse creative areas. New York based Film maker Spike Lee has a great blueprint: artistic independence, social commentary, and commercial creative projects outside film. I'm also inspired by producers and beat makers, the likes of Jay Dilla, Dj Premier and Madlib. Fundamentally, I find my inspiration through creative youth cultures, music, independent streetwear, street art and design.

#### How would you say your work might influence the younger generation?

Elements of my work and narratives highlight and celebrate aspects of youth culture. My work has been exposed in London skate parks; at South Bank University; and I have engaged young people with my work during education art projects that I've devised that invite and encourage young people to express themselves.





#### What advice would you give to young people venturing into creative practice?

Be open to gaining and developing various creative skills sets. Aim to be reliable and consistent with meeting deadlines and delivering projects to the best of your abilities. Be resourceful. I have found I have gained a wealth of knowledge, experience and creative skills by working with other creatives within professional and educational environments and being part of a creative team. Be open minded and flexible with your ideas, and have fun experimenting and exploring.



# JEZ JACOBS

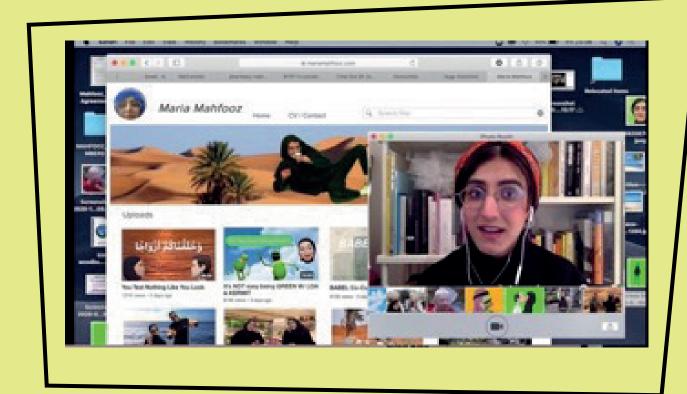
#### How has heritage shaped your practice?

I was born in the UK to Jamaican and Antiguan parents of African descent, which I have assimilated as part of an ongoing cultural identity. My African and Caribbean Heritage has shaped my practice too, to a degree. I have crafted the use of narratives and social commentary, which is a key feature in Reggae music. And I have created figurative and sculptural objects, and characters representing the body, which are key features in African art.

#### How did you find your identity through your practice?

I feel I have nurtured my cultural identity through my work and have also developed a visual identity. I am continuously creating and developing an ongoing series through digital processes, paintings, t-shirts and sculptures, using recurring images and elements throughout these works. Whereby I have been continuously creating and developing series of work through digital processes, paintings, t-shirts and sculptures. Using recurring images and elements throughout the works.

## FINE ARTS GRADUATE MARIA MAHFOOZ



Maria Mahfooz is a recent arts graduate. Take a look at this video of a workshop about her creative practise, which she has created for the South London Gallery's School & Community Programme:

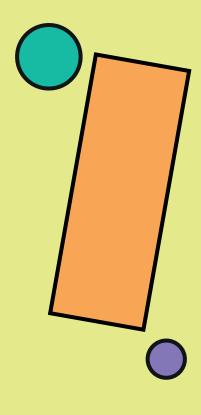
# FINE ARTS GRADUATE MARIA MAHFOOZ

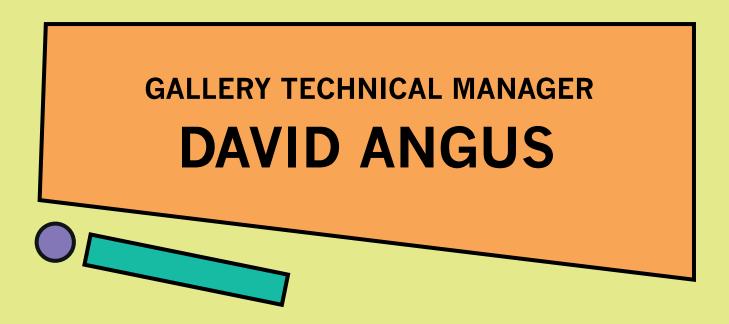
Maria Mahfooz graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2019. Her work was recently selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries, which was exhibited at the South London Gallery in 2021.

### BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE SLG

Maybe you like art, or artists, or galleries – but you prefer maths, writing, strategy, or building stuff with your hands. Behind every gallery project or exhibition, there's a team of planners, makers, and project managers needed to make the gallery function.







#### Introduce yourself and your role?

My name is David Angus, and I am the Gallery Technical Manager for the South London Gallery. I am responsible for planning and managing the installation and de-installation of all SLG exhibitions, off site commissions, events and performances. I plan, organise and prepare all installation requirements. I manage a team of freelance technicians and organise logistics for the transport, delivery and collection of art works. I supervise the artwork condition checking reports, which documents the condition of artworks coming into the gallery, and I work with the Curators to identify any specific requirements for incoming and outgoing artworks. I also work on exhibition design in collaboration with Curators and Artists.

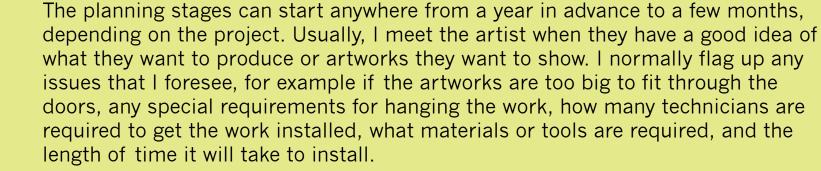
# GALLERY TECHNICAL MANAGER DAVID ANGUS



#### How did you get into your role at the gallery?

I worked as a gallery assistant after graduating from university. Initially, I would help out on installing exhibitions from time to time, and then got the opportunity to work as a technician there, which helped to build my experience. After a few years of doing that, an opportunity came up at the SLG to be the Gallery Technical Manager, and I realised that this was something I wanted to do as a career, so I applied.

#### How do you prepare for an installing and de-installing an exhibition?





# DAVID ANGUS

#### How do you transport exhibitions items safely?

We generally use art transport companies that specialise in the transportation of art works. They are either crated, or soft packed, and this will totally depend on the size and fragility of the artwork, and the artist's recommendations.

#### Do you use special protective gear when handling the artworks?

We wear gloves when handling the artworks to help protect the work, and we always must take great care not to damage the artwork when moving it and installing it. This is probably one of the most important aspects of the job.

# GALLERY TECHNICAL MANAGER DAVID ANGUS

#### What happens if artwork is damaged?

We make what's called a condition report when we receive an artwork to exhibit, which is a record of the condition of an artwork as we receive it. The condition report tracks the condition of the art as it is moved across different locations and galleries, so we know that it arrives and leaves the SLG in the same condition.

If an artwork is damaged, then we normally write an incident report. This is usually a report outline what happened, why and how the artwork was damaged. The incident report is then sent to the gallery that represents the artist, or to the artist directly, and we wait to be advised of what to do next. Usually, we instruct a conserver to repair any damage, but this will depend on the type of work and what has happened. Doesn't happen too often, thankfully!



### PROJECTS CURATOR RACHAEL HARLOW





#### Tell us about your role at the gallery?

Hello, I'm Rachael the Projects Curator at SLG. In my role I work across several different programmes including exhibitions, events, residencies, public commissioning with local residents and producing our artists' editions. This means I'm often working on production of artworks, liaising with contractors and fabricators, organising travel and shipping logistics, writing interpretive texts as well as supporting artists with their ideas and lots of internal policy and system development.

#### What do you like about your role?

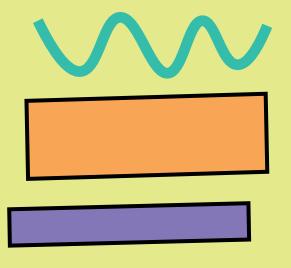
No two days are the same! Every project teaches you a new skill, or production method, or something about materials, different cultures, theoretical frame works - and you meet a lot of new people. My favourite part is all the conversations you have. I especially enjoy facilitating conversations between very different people involved in projects; for example, when working on the SLG's Orozco Garden it involved bringing together architects, builders, stone manufactures, an artist, Southwark Council and local residents, all with their own special knowledge and expertise.

## PROJECTS CURATOR RACHAEL HARLOW



#### How did you get into your role at the gallery?

I studied Fine Art and History of Art BA at Goldsmiths' College, and then I completed an internship in the Marketing department at SLG. It was my favourite gallery in London; I wasn't sure exactly what role I could or would be good at, but I knew I wanted to work in a public gallery. Over the years I took on lots of different short-term roles at SLG, which helped a lot because I understood how all different aspects of the gallery functioned such as operations, the bookshop and working as an assistant to the Director. I secured a longer contract as a Programme Assistant in 2013 and since then my role has grown as the gallery has grown.



#### What is a curator?

The term curator comes from the Latin cura, meaning "to take care" or to take care of the object. As my work is so much about people, whether that be artists, audiences or my peers, I like to think that my role is the to take care of the people. So, I ask myself questions such as what conditions does the artist need to make the work, how would an audience experience this work, how can the work reach people, and how does the location or the material of the work affect that? Practically speaking, Curators do different things in different organisations.

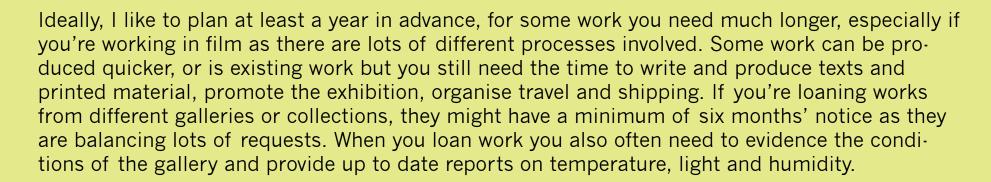
# PROJECTS CURATOR RACHAEL HARLOW

#### How do you choose the artist you will be working with to produce upcoming exhibitions?

I research artists, and this usually means following their career for a while, going to see shows they're in or reaching out to them for more information on their practice. I'm also thinking about the context of this gallery, where we are, what else is happening in the world and what other exhibitions are happening at the same or similar times. For group exhibitions the research will focus on a theme or concept and then I will be thinking about the breadth of practices being exhibited, and where there might be connections between different artists.



#### What is the average planning time to produce an exhibition? Why?



'I truly believe everyone has an inner artist residing inside them somewhere. Whether you design the next Eiffel Tower or make funny faces with your beans on toast in the mornings. An artrepreneur is someone who is a self starter, and has a vision driven by their creative passion. I decided to create these workshops quite simply for one reason, I believe everyone should have the opportunity to do what they love for a living.'

Mathieu Ajan, BFI Short Film Commissioner

### "My goal is not to change people, but to start conversations"

Othello de Souza Hartley, Visual Artist

#### **CREATIVE THINKING AND STEM**

The fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) are important disciplines to focus on in schools. Today, Arts subjects are considered to have as much value as STEM.

Art and creativity are about discovering and creating innovative ways of problem solving, integrating design principles, and presenting information clearly. By adding Arts to the STEM curriculum to make STEAM, the importance of integrated learning is highlighted. Artswork have created a useful toolkit exploring STEAM.

Through creative approaches and problem solving, we encourage creative solutions and promote resilient, healthy minds. STEAM reminds us that the power of creativity is needed in discovery, innovation and critical and analytical thinking.

### ARTS, CULTURE AND WELLBEING

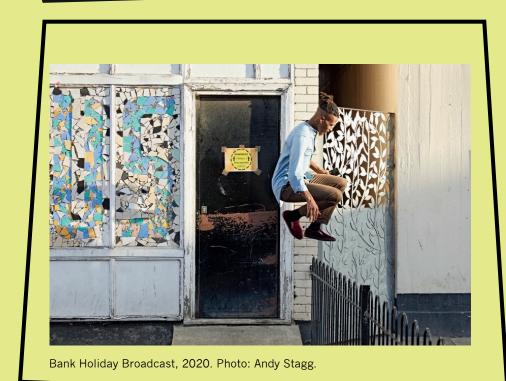
There are reported links between creativity and wellbeing. The Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance has shared a number of free toolkits and factsheets for more information.

The Creative Health Report by the All Party Parliamentary Group explores links between the arts and prevention through to treatment, and embraces the widest definition of what we mean by the arts.

The South London Gallery are proud to be part of the Southwark Culture health and Wellbeing Partnership.

#### **SENIOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**

### **CLARE ROBSON**



#### **Introduce yourself!**



I'm Clare, and I am a Senior Development Manager at the South London Gallery. Together with my colleague Leah we're responsible for raising the money that keeps the gallery (which is a registered charity) open and free to the public.

We do this in a number of ways, and my role is about making grant applications to specific organisations that support the arts, and persuading them to invest money in our projects and programmes.

I then also look after reporting back on all of the amazing work that my colleagues do to show that we have used their money wisely and hopefully provided lots of valuable experiences to people as a result.

#### What do you like about your role?



One of the main things that I like about my role is that I get to work with almost everyone in all the teams, which I find really inspiring. I also love hearing about the different ways that children are encouraged to be creative, and as I love art, I always find it really interesting to find out more about artists and their work. I enjoy writing, and also am a bit of a nerd for numbers, so I like the different sides of my brain that this role brings together.

#### How did you get into your role at the gallery?



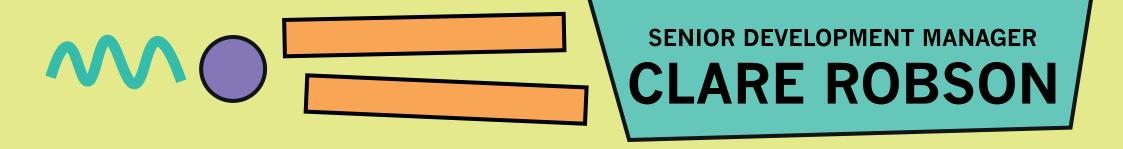
I studied Art History at university and then worked for several years at BBC Children in Need, a grant-giving organisation, where I assessed some of the grant applications and helped decide who to allocate the funding to. After that I worked at Tate in a front-of-house role on the Information desk, and then I was very happy to get my role at SLG which combined my charity and grant experience with my interest in art.

#### Tell us about how you fundraise for the SLG?

The way that I fundraise focuses on keeping up to date with the key organisations that support the arts. I need to stay up to speed with what they are looking to support, as often those organisations have lots of criteria, and they will have different deadlines to apply for funding. I am always on the lookout for new funders that I may not have heard of before, or new funding programmes that open up, and also need to keep up to date on what my colleagues are planning so that I can match up funders to projects.

#### Can you explain what a charity funded organisation is?

The South London Gallery is a registered charity. In contrast to a commercial gallery, which is established to sell art on behalf of artists, we are established for public benefit on a non-profit basis. We receive about half of our income from the government (via Arts Council England) and other charities, whose purpose is to give out grants to support cultural work that they are interested in, including our education projects, which are all free of charge. We also have individual donors who choose to support the gallery through charitable donations, and we raise some of our income from the bookshop and cafe.







I work with my colleagues to put together an application to each funder that is specifically tailored to the areas they want to fund and explaining the project or programme to them really clearly. I need to think about how much funding they are likely to give us, what our relationship is with them already, and look at other grants they have given out recently to see what kind of thing they are interested in.

I need to show that that project we're asking them to fund really makes a big difference to people, and show all of the different benefits and positive outcomes that happen as a result of each project, Once we have been lucky enough to receive funding, I then need to make sure I stay in touch with the funder, to make sure they are updated regularly, that we submit our finance reports to them on time.

What kind of person would enjoy doing a fundraising role at a gallery?

I think that my role is great for someone with patience, who enjoys process and detail, and enjoys sharing their enthusiasm for art with other people, both by writing about different projects and exhibitions and also in person. I think being friendly is a good quality in a fundraiser, because we are often introducing people to the gallery and showing them around, and enthusiasm is infectious so I think that is important too. It's also good to be resilient as a fundraiser, as you don't always get the positive outcome that you want from grant applications, and you have to remember that you win some you lose some in this role!



#### **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THE UK ECONOMY**

The creative industries sectors continue to contribute value to the UK economy - £111.7bn in 2018, according to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Additionally, the creative industries sectors are experiencing faster growth than the rest of the UK economy:

https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/site-content/uk-creative-overview-news-and-views-news-record-contribution-and-exports-from-creative-industries

You don't need to be an artist to work in the arts. Culture needs accountants, fund-raisers, and technicians. Prop makers, scenery designers, and photographers. Make-up artists, hair stylists, and fashion designers. Writers, editors and publishers. Filmmakers, photographers, and producers. Promoters, advertisers, and marketeers. Coders, product designers and architects - the list is endless...



### **BUILDING YOUR CREATIVE NETWORKS**

There are many opportunities to take part in and learn about art, culture and creative programming these days, including the South London Gallery's Art Assassins youth collective.



Dot Dot Dot a night of art and music by the Art Assassins in collaboration with Alicia Reyes McNamara, July 2017. Photo: Sam Nightingale

#### **BUILDING YOUR CREATIVE NETWORKS**



An archive by other means. Co-curated by Art Assassins at the South London Gallery, May 2021. Photo: Sam Nightingale

The Art Assassins meet regularly in South London to plan and participate in a range of creative projects for and with young people aged 14-21, with the South London Gallery and other creative partners.

If you'd like to find out more about joining the Art Assassins, please contact artassassins@southlondongallery.org

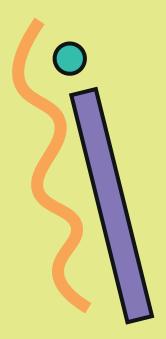
I'd like this resource to showcase the range of opportunities in the creative sector. If someone asked me how to get into the arts now, I'd say try to identify what it is you like best - film, curating, spoken word, fashion... then check out arts organisations in your area, see what they're offering.

As well as exhibitions, often there'll be opportunities to join youth programmes or networks, apply for traineeships, or take part in creative workshops.

Discovering where you want to be can mean exploring many different creative avenues, so be curious and keep going!"

Jahzel Newell-Marshall Residents' Programme Coordinator





This resource was devised for SLG Schools by Jahzel Newell-Marshall as part of the Open Plan traineeship. Jahzel is now the Residents' Programme Coordinator.

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