



Social ARTery evaluation report May 2021

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**Thank you to everyone who participated in the
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Introduction

This report brings together evaluation conducted as part of Phase 1 of the Social ARTery (*Pioneers' Programme*), which took place between October 2020 – February 2021. Jointly led by Axis and Social Art Network (SAN), the Social ARTery is a new and bespoke interactive online platform for and about social art practice¹ that aims to facilitate remote collaboration, creative exchange and art making. The grant received as part of Arts Council England's (ACE) Emergency Fund was used to pilot and activate the development of the Social ARTery across regional artist 'hubs' in the UK and support the continuation of participatory art within the current context of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Envisaged as a networked, safe and caring space for artworkers and participants alike, the platform was extensively explored and tested throughout the programme by a select group of artists (or *Pioneers*), as well as in some cases, the communities with whom they were working. As part of their participation, the *Pioneers* assumed the dual-role of co-producers and "critical friends"; on the one hand, experimenting on the platform with the running of micro-commissions, such as creative workshops, events or discussion groups, and on the other, reflecting on and sharing their experiences.

Evaluative data regarding the current functionality of the Social ARTery and suggestions as to its ongoing improvement were collated throughout the duration of the programme using different qualitative and quantitative methods. These included: 1) two online meetups held at the beginning and end of the programme; 2) 16 closing feedback questionnaires, and; 3) a series of 1-2-1 reflective interviews held with eight artists and four members of the Social ARTery team.² While this report does touch upon some of the different ways in which the *Pioneers* and Social ARTery team made use of the platform, particular attention is paid to users' first-hand experiences of and reflections on the site's usability, its content, purpose and design. The scope of the Social ARTery, as well as its limitations and potential are presented in relation to its original aims and ethos. Towards the end of this document, key learnings, considerations and recommendations are also provided in the hope that they will help to shape the platform in Phase 2 of its development and beyond.

1 A visual arts practice collaborating with audiences through participation.

2 Unless explicitly named, in this document 'users' refer to anyone who used the platform and critically reflected on their experiences during this pilot phase.

The origins of the Social ARTery

The Social ARTery is a partnership project devised and managed by Axis; an independent charity and digital art organisation with more than 30 years of experience specializing in innovative and user-driven online solutions for artists, and Social Art Network (SAN); a UK-wide mutual aid group that aims to expand critical/reflective dialogue around social practice art, strengthen peer support, artists' development and visibility of practice, and build a database of projects. Since 2015, Axis has developed original research focusing on social practice art (in collaboration with Manchester School of Art and Innovate UK), a wide range of commissions, events and activities aimed at supporting and promoting the social practice sector, and published a journal dedicated to social practice art (Social Works? Open). It also hosts the Social Art Library (an artist-led archive of social projects and resources).

In March 2020, in response to the far-reaching and devastating effects of the pandemic, Axis created an emergency hardship fund drawing on £6000 from its own reserves to support 60 practitioners. The overwhelming number of applications, alongside testimonies about income loss of 80% - 100% with no future assurances, were evidence of yet more damage to a sector whose structures and systems have been deemed unfit for purpose.³ Submissions generated by the fund also highlighted the acute and disproportionate impact of coronavirus on social artists. Not only was their work more likely to have been delayed or cancelled (particularly reliant, as it is, on interpersonal interactions, collaboration and physical proximity), but most were unable to access other forms of financial support owing to their status as self-employed workers. Recognising that disruption to the livelihoods and wellbeing of artists, as well as the communities they served, was likely to be long term, Axis subsequently made the decision to activate and repurpose an existing Beta digital framework in order to facilitate remote social practice. While the organisation directly financed the Social ARTery's technology and build, all artists' activity was supported by funding from ACE.⁴

³ Burns (2021), May et al. (2020). Also see research by Axis: 'Beyond the Gallery' (2015), 'Models of Validation' project (2017 - 2020), 'Social Works' programme (2018), 'From Network to Meshwork' (2020), Emergency Fund testimonies [unpublished] (2020).

⁴ Total ACE budget lines: (Percentages) Support Staff £3,000.00 8.57%, Artist Fees £30,500.00 87.14%, Evaluation £1,500.00 4.29%, Total - 100.00%.

The Projects

Phase 1 of the Social ARTery (*Pioneers' Programme*) was carried out over a five-month period. During this time, a total of 20 artist commissions were delivered and the platform's members grew to almost 400 with artist Pioneers, participants from ARTery project groups and associated members from SAN, Axis and partner organisations represented.⁵ The series of micro commissions or 'social activities' proposed by the Pioneers were supported with one-off bursaries of £500 and demonstrated a wide range of creative interests and artistic practices including: moving-image, craft, storytelling, performance, collaborative research, puppetry, food, community activism and even yoga and mindfulness. Examples of projects include: a colour club bringing together artists and communities from across the UK (and beyond) for discussions about colour in the built and natural environment; a three-part podcast series exploring diverse community stories and experiences of life and work in the London Borough of Poplar, and; an archive and critical reflection initiative documenting food waste and storytelling workshops with migrant women of colour in and around Bristol. Overall, the participating artists used the Social ARTery to:

- Create profiles to showcase their social art practice
- Create groups and events related to Pioneer activities
- Upload, archive and share documents, photos and links to videos related to Pioneer activities (thereby creating a digital "home" for projects)
- Find out more about the work of other Pioneers
- Contact and "converse" with other Pioneers.

⁵ This growth (equivalent to an increase of 1380%), strongly suggests that overall the platform played an important role in supporting and growing social art practice over the lifespan of the Programme. However, as will be discussed later in this report, broader conclusions regarding the site's success are dependent on further research into the motivations and experiences of non-artist users on the ARTery. It is also worth mentioning here that intensive project delivery and mass 'onboarding' of new users was the result of a reduction to the Programme's delivery schedule. Originally, the Social ARTery team had planned to gradually incorporate the Pioneers onto the platform via phased introductions before opening up the space to other users.

Key Findings

Significantly, owing to some technical limitations at its pilot stage, very few artists were able to run their social activities on the ARTery. This led many to either modify the commissions they had submitted as part of the application process or to carry out the “live” collaboration part of their activity on other digital platforms (such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp and Miro, amongst others). As a result, the site became less a space for creative delivery and more one of documentation, dissemination, and to a lesser degree, artistic exchange. Despite this, most artists did encourage members of the groups that they were working with to sign up to the site. Of the eight interviewed, five invited participants to create profiles on the ARTery with three confirming that they knew of individuals who had gone on to do so. Although there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that the involvement of non-artist users on the platform was significantly different to that of artists, detailed investigation into their experiences falls outside the purview of this particular research.

Outlined below are the key findings of this report:

- The platform was an adequate and timely response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Social practice artists want access to a space like the Social ARTery however its continued use is dependent on the degree to which it is able to respond to their needs and interests.
- There is a lack of consensus about who the Social ARTery is for and whether it can (and should) cater for both artists and the communities they serve.
- The ethos and ambition of the platform, although much-commended by the Pioneers, is not yet matched by their experience of using it.
- Future iterations of the platform should: 1) privilege showcasing projects and facilitating collaboration, 2) provide a tailored/multi-tiered user experience, 3) reflect artistic content and creativity in its design, 4) be fully accessible, 5) combine the energy of ‘live’ peer-to-peer forums with the inspirational qualities of the Social Art Library.
- Artists believe in the Social ARTery and want it to succeed / most are keen to contribute to its ongoing development.

This report raises important questions about the possible role of innovative digital solutions to help artists and communities work better together in a changing art sector and in response to a global health crisis whose medium to long-term effects are as yet unknown.

The Evaluation

This report is based on research with both commissioned artist participants and the producers and coordinators of the Social ARTery. It is important to note that despite Axis repurposing an existing Beta framework for the platform, at the time of testing it was new to all users regardless of their role in the programme. Members of the Social ARTery team who provided feedback as part of the evaluation process included: the Axis Social Producer & Lead Artist, the Social ARTery Project Coordinator, the Social ARTery Digital Mentor and a Studio Assistant from partner organisation Applied Live Art Studio. As previously mentioned, the Pioneers comprised of a cohort of 20 artists (independents as well as artists' partnerships and collectives) who were drawn primarily from SAN's network as well as Axis' Social Works stakeholder group and its wider membership. Data relating to the geographic location of artists reveals that all were based in England (across rural regions, towns and cities), with the South West, the South East, the East Midlands, the North East and the North West all represented. Whereas the vast majority of Pioneers self-identified as 'socially-engaged', 'community' or 'collaborative' artists, a few preferred to use less-specific terms to describe themselves; often citing their involvement in other kinds of 'non-social' art-making.

An assessment of the pilot launch and development of the Social ARTery in relation to its intended outcomes and deliverables was commissioned by Axis as part of the Pioneers' Programme. The evaluation strategy was jointly developed and implemented by the freelance Digital Evaluator and the Social ARTery team. Data collection took place at regular intervals throughout the lifespan of the project and in particular following the completion of artists' social activities during the closing Feedback forum and via questionnaires and semi-structured individual or group interviews. With the exception of the Feedback forum, anonymity was offered to participants at all stages of the evaluation and contributed to many feeling able to share their reflections more freely. So as to ensure parity between those who were happy to be named in this report and others who preferred not to disclose their identity, a decision has been made to keep all quotes anonymous. In keeping with Axis' aim to support and profile artists, wherever possible the actual words of the Pioneers and Social ARTery team have been used to illustrate wider findings.

The evaluation had four main aims:

1. to collate and analyse artist feedback
2. to understand and communicate the intersection between digital technology, participation and new users
3. to facilitate reflection within the Social ARTery team to inform learning
4. to recognise and consider the importance of inclusion and diversity both in the Social ARTery and in the wider network of communities that artists either represent or work with.

The evaluation also sought to answer the overarching question: “To what degree has the Social ARTery met the needs of socially-engaged artists during lock-down and what long-term implications might it have for the facilitation of remote collaboration and creative exchange?”

Social art practice in the context of a global pandemic

Since March 2020, Coronavirus Covid-19 has radically changed the world and the ways in which we live and work. In its attempts to reduce the spread of the virus, the UK government has imposed restrictions, from self-isolation and limits to freedom of movement to the closure of schools and “non-essential” businesses; a secondary effect of which has been to further entrench economic and social inequalities already established by a decade of austerity. Recent research carried out by University College London reveals that workers in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic’s adverse socioeconomic and psychosocial effects owing to a combination of pre-pandemic financial precarity, the long-term closure of cultural production sites and the fact that many are ineligible for state support.⁶ Furthermore, a study by a-n (The Artists Information Company), shows startling evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on the artistic practice, business and lives of artists and arts managers’, such as significant reductions to income, access to studio space and networking opportunities.⁷

As referred to at the beginning of this report, Axis’ own extensive body of research confirms a lack of adequate infrastructure and care across the arts and cultural sector, which during the current health emergency has pushed artists, and particularly social practice artists, to crisis point.⁸ On the other hand, there is ample evidence to suggest that by supporting social art not only are the most vulnerable in society also supported, but the recovery of the arts sector as a whole is also much more likely. In this sense, although the Social ARTery may be viewed, in part, as an important component in Axis’ emergency coronavirus response, its development also builds on the charity’s long-term commitment to providing, on the one hand, artists with spaces that privilege their voices and profile what they do, and on the other, opportunities to explore care-driven and artist-led solutions to complex social problems.

6 May et al. (2020)

7 ‘Covid-19 Impact Survey’, a-n The Artists Information Company (2020)

8 ‘Beyond the Gallery’ (2015), ‘Models of Validation’ project (2017 - 2020), ‘Social Works’ programme (2018), ‘From Network to Meshwork’ (2020), Emergency Fund testimonies [unpublished] (2020).

At the start of the Social ARTery Pioneers' Programme, the stated aims of the platform were to:

- Provide a safe and dedicated online space for artists to pursue their practice with others
- Facilitate remote collaboration and creative exchange
- Create and present participatory art in innovative ways
- Run workshops
- Host peer-to-peer meetups
- Archive learnings for the benefit of the wider artistic community

As will be shown in this report, at its pilot phase, the Social ARTery partially met its aims and objectives although in a number of important ways it was not able to realize its full potential.

The Social ARTery: a timely response to Covid-19

The multiple and traumatic effects of the pandemic provided a backdrop to users' experiences of the Social ARTery. In interviews, more than half spoke directly or indirectly about the emotional and psychological toll that months of social isolation had had either on their own professional and personal lives or the communities that they worked with. While some described feelings of anxiety, loneliness or a loss of confidence in their creative practice as a result of the prolonged health crisis, others specifically prefaced their interest in getting involved in the development of the platform with accounts of insecurity and ongoing disruption to work. Uncertainties about the future of collaborative and social art-making were underpinned by a general acceptance of the potential long-term need for accessible and innovative digital solutions. Consequently, the concept of a dedicated online space for social practice artists was widely welcomed by the Pioneers, albeit with many stipulating their ongoing support for the ARTery with a need for full functionality and/or improvements so that it would meet their specific needs and interests.

The pilot launch of the ARTery coincided with the second UK lockdown; at which time the working practices as well as social interactions of artist participants and the Social ARTery team had necessarily become almost entirely digitised. With a few notable exceptions, the majority of interviewees expressed either ambivalence or fatigue when talking about their relationships with the array of video-conferencing apps, social media platforms and online shared-working tools that had become a fixture of their lives. At least six spoke of their wish to “switch off” from, or at the very least, streamline their interactions with digital spaces as a way of minimizing their public exposure and the “extra admin” that these implied. This was particularly true of social media (such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook), which was seen to be a drain on people's time and energy and even damaging to their mental health. These attitudes, although no doubt strengthened by months of cancelled and delayed in-person activities, are relevant to the ongoing development of the Social ARTery; on the one hand, they help to explain why some users found the pilot platform particularly tiring or frustrating, and on the other, they provide deeper insights into what users liked and disliked about working and interacting in the digital sphere.

Finally, it is important to note that in bringing people together to collectively test out the ARTery, the programme made a positive contribution to the sector by providing a vital space for care and support during these particularly uncertain and turbulent times. As a result of their involvement in the programme, a significant number of Pioneers (13 out of 16) were able to meet and interact remotely with peers who previous to joining the ARTery had been unknown to them. These encounters were described in overwhelmingly positive terms, as demonstrated by the following comments: “I met some wonderful people” // “The meetups were great” // “The platform has already introduced me to peers and increased my confidence in my work”. Although neither during the feedback questionnaires nor interviews were respondents asked to reflect at length on the impact of the ARTery on their experience of the pandemic, there were several comments which reveal that beyond its stated aims of collaboration and creative exchange, the Pioneers’ Programme provided much-needed opportunities for more casual social connections particularly for those individuals who had had little to no interaction with other artists for many months.

Experiences of using the Social ARTery

As previously mentioned, technical limitations to the pilot platform (namely the lack of integrated video) meant that the ambition for artists to host workshops and meetups on the Social ARTery was left largely unfulfilled. However, they were able to engage with the site in a number of other ways. Over a five-month period the Pioneers used it to: 1) create profiles showcasing their social art practice; 2) create groups and events related to Pioneer activities; 3) upload, archive and share documents, photos and links to videos related to Pioneer activities; 4) find out more about the work of other Pioneers, and; 5) contact and “chat” with one another. With regards to the design and usability of the platform (by which we mean its accessibility and availability, clarity, and learnability), the ARTery, although popular with some users who enjoyed its “informal” aesthetic and setup, was considered by others to be counterintuitive and overall difficult to navigate. Examples of the latter included its excessive use of hard-to-read text as well as an overall cluttered appearance that seemed to bury artists’ activity and hinder creative exchange. Although the platform did support users to meet and interact with other artists, a significant proportion of interviewees described how subsequent to making contact on the platform, conversations then continued by phone, email or other social media, which were deemed quicker and easier to use. Finally, the onboarding of participants from communities working with commissioned artists, although not generalised during this testing phase, did occur and produced mixed results.

In the following subsections, more detailed feedback is provided in relation to the extensive examination of the platform by users of the Social ARTery. Subsection a begins by considering users’ motivations and expectations of the site compared to their overall experience. Subsection b reflects on how users felt the programme was run, and subsection c explores the ideas and opinions of the Pioneers and Social ARTery team concerning the usability, content and design of the platform. This section finishes with a series of evaluation headlines outlining the degree to which Phase 1 of the Social ARTery might be said to have met its original aims.

a. Expectations vs. reality: a space for connections

For many Pioneers, the Social ARTery presented an intriguing opportunity to either activate or consolidate activity and/or networks that had moved online as a result of social distancing. Some were motivated to participate as part of personal ongoing investigations into possible alternative digital spaces, which were both safe to share with communities and conducive to creative and participatory group working. Others were attracted by the ethos of the ARTery and spoke enthusiastically of how refreshing it was to be invited to contribute to the development of an ethical, “care-filled” and artist-led platform free from advertising and data harvesting. Although it was almost universally understood that as part of its pilot phase, the Social ARTery would be far from a comprehensive and fully-functioning digital package, it is clear that at the very beginning of the programme there was limited understanding, particularly among the Pioneers, of what a “site-in-construction” actually looked like. Although this is not surprising given that users were neither specialists in website design or development, and that their applications had been made prior to onboarding; for some, misconceptions about what the site would and would not contain led to a confusing first couple of weeks of interaction.

Nevertheless, artist participants took their role as Pioneers very seriously, dedicating significant amounts of time and effort to exploring and testing out the platform both specifically as part of the development of their particular activity but also more generally so as to become better acquainted with its features. As one individual put it, “I didn’t mind it because it was a job. I had a responsibility”. Several other artists mentioned how pleased they were that their time had been properly reimbursed by the programme and it seems that this approach, plus repeated invitations by the Social ARTery team to feedback, encouraged the Pioneers to provide more detailed and honest assessments of the site than might otherwise have been given had they been just casual users.

When asked in their feedback questionnaires whether the Social ARTery had met their expectations, four Pioneers said “yes” with the remaining 12 selecting “partially”. For a small minority of the artists from the second group, this disparity between expectations and reality can be partly explained by the fact that they had no preconceived ideas of the ARTery prior to their engagement with it. However, further investigation of their answers, as well as others provided in interviews, reveals important information about the extent to which the platform might be considered a viable and attractive digital space both in its current form and possible future iterations. Responses may be grouped and described as follows:

- *Enthusiastic & committed (25% of users)*: In this first group of responses, artists were overwhelming positive about their experience of the Social ARTery as well as what they saw as its exciting potential. Words such as “brilliant” “amazing” “refreshing” and “great” were used to refer to all aspects of their involvement in the Pioneers Programme; from its delivery through to their explorations of the ARTery itself. This is not to say that these responses did not acknowledge that there were aspects or features of the platform that needed improvement – all of them did- but in general, participants placed an emphasis on how optimistic they were feeling about the site and the fact that they looked forward to contributing to its ongoing development.

Key quotes:

–“I’m so happy that it’s happening...[it] just feels like it’s a really important thing to be doing.”

–“It felt great to be part of it.”

–“I can’t wait to see the ARTery move forward!”

- *Intrigued but cautious (50% of users)*: In this second group of responses, artists expressed genuine interest and positive engagement with certain aspects and features of the Social ARTery (and by extension the Pioneers Programme), particularly its ethos and the way in which it was able to bring peers into contact with one another. Unfortunately, certain technical difficulties and inbuilt limitations within the platform’s design restricted their overall enjoyment of participation. Those articulating mixed feelings did not reject outright the possibility that, in the future, the Social ARTery might become an important and stimulating space for some social practice artists and communities. However, several did express doubts as to whether it would be able to fulfil their own specific requirements, especially when compared to other digital platforms that they were already using.

Key quotes:

–“I met some wonderful people but I’m not sure how much I would use the platform to plan/share events.”

–“Although I respect the ethos, in practice, I already do all the networking I need through existing sites that have an international and multidisciplinary audience.”

- *Reluctant and/or unconvinced (25% of users)*: In the third group of responses, artists explained that the disadvantages of using the Social ARTery far outweighed any advantages and that their experience of using the platform had left them feeling irritated or unconvinced of its benefits either to artists or the groups that they worked with. While one respondent wondered whether the money used to improve the site might be better used in other ways to support artists, some individuals were unconvinced by the ARTery’s use of familiar design features and functions such as the ‘like’ button, which seemed to ape the more problematic aspects of other digital platforms. Although in general these responses revealed skepticism about the ability

of the ARTery (as currently conceptualized), to meet the varied need of artists, other aspects of the Pioneers' Programme (particularly the Forum meetups and the Social Art Library), were singled out for praise and held up as possible models for future artist-led digital solutions.

Key quotes:

-“Life's too short.”

-“Although I appreciate it is a platform in development overall it was too unnatural to use to lead me to want to use it to replace other platforms.”

-“I want to be able to find out about other projects and network with artists in an easier way.”

b. The Social ARTery: it all feels very inviting

Beyond artists' reflections on the current state or future potential of the platform, there was a lot of positive feeling directed towards the Pioneers' Programme as a 'way in' to the ARTery. While 13 out of 16 feedback form respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "being part of the Social ARTery has made a positive difference to me", some of the most enthusiastic responses were reserved for the "supportive and helpful" Social ARTery team who seemed genuinely interested in what artists had to say regarding the development of the platform, and who ran the Programme in a way that felt "transparent and straightforward". For the Axis Social Producer & Lead Artist, the Social ARTery Project Coordinator and the Social ARTery Digital Mentor, it was clear that as first-time co-designers of a digital platform everyone was navigating new territory. For some team members, occupying the dual position of learner / facilitator could at times feel uncomfortable, especially if they were concerned that artists were expecting them to be 'experts' in the Social ARTery ("you[re] just trying to hold that role, as in... "You can come to me for any problem" and at the same time [...], "I'm learning with you!"). However, from the point of view of the Pioneers, the overriding sense was that the programme provided artists with appropriate levels of technical support while also involving and including them in all stages of the first phase of the platform's development. In this way, it is possible to conclude that the Social ARTery pilot fulfilled its commitment to listen to art-makers and embed an ethos of artist-led decision-making that will surely define the project as it evolves.

c. Usability, content & design: still some way to go

With regards to the usability of the platform, the overall experience of both the Pioneers and the Social ARTery team was mixed. While some of the artist interviewees spoke of how easy it was to get started, once on the site, many expressed confusion or frustration about navigating around the features (“I got a bit lost, I’m afraid”). It is important to say that in the feedback questionnaires nearly half of the Pioneers noted that their confidence with, and understanding of, the Social ARTery improved with repeated use, although one individual did say that the longer they spent on the platform “the less intuitive it seem[ed]”. The words “intuitive” and “counterintuitive” appeared multiple times across the evaluation data. For some, these words were used to explain their differing experiences of very specific technical features of the Social ARTery, while for others they were used to describe how they felt about their overall exploration of the platform and subsequent understanding of what could be done there. Regarding the latter, a third of artists and two members of the Social ARTery team suggested, or voiced concerns, that once on the ARTery, there wasn’t much to do. Although in some cases this might have been because they had missed or not yet found features of interest, half of interviewees felt that even extensive efforts to explore the site yielded limited rewards. An additional but related reflection suggested that once away from the platform there was little to draw users back.

When reflecting on the content and functionality of the Social ARTery, a small minority of users (including one artist and two members of the Social ARTery team), described how pleased they were to find a site that was both simple and straightforward to use. Unfortunately, this view was far from universal, with a general consensus being that the platform was overcomplicated and that processes required to “get things done” comprised of too many steps which slowed down users’ experience of the space. Overwhelmingly prevalent were problems in locating information and a sense that messages and invitations to join events or groups were routinely being missed. On the other hand, easy access to information related to Axis’ policy documents and ethical code, as well as an inbuilt feedback form (“Tell us what you think”), were widely commended, with several people saying that it was evidence of the ARTery’s, and by extension, Axis’, commitment to ethical integrity and transparency.

The extent to which the ARTery might be considered accessible was addressed in a variety of ways: 1) in relation to disability (particularly visual impairment and neurodiversity), 2) in relation to individuals who did not identify as ‘tech-savvy’, and finally, 3) with regards to ESOL learners / speakers. On all fronts, the platform was either felt to be lacking or in need of further testing. All users without exception, agreed that the availability of the site was hampered by its “clunky” and “slow” response time and its incompatibility with smartphones. Although most followed up these comments by acknowledging that they were interacting with a Beta platform, when combined with concerns about the site’s crowded interface and lot of effort with little reward (or “lack

of learning curve”), some users voiced uncertainty about how the space might be ‘sold’ either to artists or community groups who had not been part of the Pioneer Programme and therefore would likely be less patient with the platform’s idiosyncrasies.

Although not all users expressed clear opinions about the layout and visual character of the platform, those that did often felt strongly about it. Two Pioneers in particular were keen to explain that they really liked the Social ARtery’s design, with one describing how they felt that its “informal aesthetic” not only distinguished it from other slicker-looking platforms but also invited a diversity of types of interactions from users. Those who were less enthusiastic about the look of the Social ARtery commented variously on what they saw as a “cluttered” or “crowded” landing page or “distracting” layout, as well as a lack of differentiated visual identity across the ARtery pages. While four users highlighted that the grey-coloured text was hard to read and would most likely prove difficult for users with dyslexia or any form of visual impairment, six of the Pioneer interviewees and one Social Artery team member expressed some disappointment that for an interface on a website aimed at visual artists, it lacked a broader colour palette and other forms of visual stimulation. Finally, although one or two users mentioned that they like the platform’s scrolling mechanism as was reminiscent of platforms such as Facebook and therefore reassuringly familiar, there was significant appetite for the Social ARtery to radically depart from more conventional organisation of data to reflect and facilitate more playful interactions and creative collaborations.

Evaluation Summary

When the artist call-out was launched by Axis in autumn of 2020, the stated aims of the Social ARtery Pioneers' Programme were to support socially-engaged artists to stay remotely connected, inspired and creative during lockdown and beyond. Through the platform itself, it also specifically proposed to: provide a safe and bespoke space for artists in which to run workshops and collaborate; to host peer-to-peer meetups, and; to archive and share learnings related to social art practices and processes. Outlined below are a series of summary points, which both illustrate the degree to which Phase 1 of the Social ARtery met its original goals and document unexpected results:

- Although hugely diverse in content, **the ARtery-commissioned projects sought to imaginatively adapt and respond to the international health crisis.** Besides facilitating creative interventions that helped to strengthen community resilience across different parts of England (and in some cases, even further afield), they also contributed to the construction of new artists' networks and partnerships between Pioneers based on shared interests and/or practices.
- **Pioneer projects widened access to collective artistic activities and experiences by ensuring inclusivity in terms of age, gender, class and ethnicity.**⁹
- Despite the Social ARtery platform initially being envisaged as a space to host workshops and peer-to-peer meetups, **a lack of integrated video in the repurposed Beta framework meant that any live activity, whether collaborative art-making or face-to-face discussions, could not be accommodated by the site and therefore took place elsewhere.** Regardless, commissioned artists showed enormous flexibility and resourcefulness, engaging with and interacting on the site in numerous different ways, which led to multiple projects finding a "home" on the ARtery.
- **Collaborative art-making with participants / communities happened sporadically on the ARtery.** In fact, various Pioneers tried and succeeded in getting participants from the groups that they were working with to sign up to the site although several noted that once there, people seemed unsure about what to do. Other artists were either not able to convince their participants to join them on the platform or were not fully convinced themselves that the site was really relevant to the communities they were working with. One noted that the space wasn't appropriate for some of their participants who were under 18 and more generally **there were questions about what 'safe space' meant in the context of the ARtery.**

⁹ Although systematic equality and diversity monitoring was not carried out as part of the Pioneers' Programme, during the application process, artists were asked to provide information relating to themselves and their practice as well as the communities that they would be working with. This data reveals that in different ways, commissions sought to improve access to creative and cultural activity and counteract deep-rooted disadvantage and prejudice within the arts sector. Specifically, Pioneer projects were comprised of disabled, neuro-divergent and D/deaf workers, audiences and participants; BPOC workers, audiences and participants; Children and Young People and Older People, and; artists and participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Cf. ACE's Temporary Equality Objectives (2020).

- **Peer-to-peer collaboration sometimes started or ended up on the ARTery but while in process was facilitated by other digital spaces.** Overall, supporting artists to meet peers through the ARTery was one of the great successes of the Pioneers' Programme. However, as a result of the platform's technical shortcomings, users often moved conversations started on the site into other digital domains. Additionally, at least a half of the Pioneers interviewed reflected that when using the ARTery to deliver, promote or archive their activities they felt they were often duplicating collaborative work that was already happening on other applications (such as Slack, Zoom, Google Docs or Facebook). Several artist partnerships and collectives also expressed a wish to have had the option to join the ARTery as a group (rather than as individual practitioners). In this sense, it can be said that "the ARTery felt like a reception area [and] not somewhere you'd want to hang out to party or spend a lot of time".
- **The commitment of the Pioneers' Programme to the development of a dedicated artist-led site was reflected in the emergence of ARTery-specific social conventions between users.** These included an overall tendency towards mutual support when navigating the platform and the development by artists and the Social ARTery team of 'work-arounds' to persistent technical issues, often facilitated using group chat functions. Gradual changes made by Axis to the layout of the ARTery were also as a direct result of user feedback and are further evidence of an approach based on horizontal decision-making and reciprocal learning. **In addition, artists expressed that they were pleased to have been asked to contribute to the development of the Social ARTery and felt that their voices and opinions were heard.**
- **For more than half of users, it was important that the ARTery presented itself as an ethical and sector-specific alternative to generic online media and video communication platforms, and for many, their participation in its pilot phase centred around a special interest in this particular characteristic.** On the other hand, as a result of this special interest, important questions were raised about the way the site might operate in future in relation to other digital tools and software. In general, users considered that the success of the ARTery would be dependent on: 1) its ability to retain users and attract new ones over the long-term, and, 2) the extent to which it struck a balance between providing a unique user experience (i.e. one that could not be easily replicated or bettered elsewhere), and one that remained compatible with the wider ecology of other mainstream sites without reproducing unhelpful or damaging features.

Key learnings and recommendations: A step into the dark?

In January 2020, the world as we knew it changed. Now, when we think back to the first Global Public Health Emergency announcement by the World Health Organisation it seems incredible that nearly every aspect of our public and private lives has been subject to disruption and uncertainty for well over a year. In a multitude of ways, the pandemic has left us reeling and worried about the future. On the other hand, during this period, artists, makers and practitioners have responded to unprecedented levels of precarity, ambiguity and loss with enormous dignity and resilience. Although it may feel far too soon to be drawing conclusions about what we have learnt (so far) about ourselves, our sector, and the communities that we work with, it is important that we feel empowered to collectively try to adapt to our new and possibly permanent social realities.

In this final section of this report, questions regarding the inevitable shift towards digitization as part of social art practice and creative collaboration will be considered in relation to key learnings from Phase 1 of the Social ARTery (Pioneers' Programme). In keeping with earlier sections, the reflections and suggestions of users of the pilot platform will first be presented as part of an imaginative scoping exercise, which will try to summarise those elements that artist users consider fundamental to any future iteration of the ARTery. This impression will then be followed by five recommendations focusing on a series of specific aspects of the platform. At this point, I would like to stress that these recommendations are not the result of extensive consultation with either current ARTery members or possible future ones, but based on my own subjective experiences and thoughts regarding the site since joining the Pioneers' Programme as Digital Evaluator in January 2021. I mention this as I think it is important to be aware of the fact that in addition to a severe lack of research into the immediate effects of the pandemic on the arts sector as a whole, there currently appears to be a general reluctance on the part of institutions and independent experts to predict (in concrete terms), what possible futures might await artists, audiences and participants, and what tools they might need to navigate them. While I agree that in an unfolding crisis, it pays to be cautious, more must be done to ensure that those who have a stake in whatever happens next, are given a seat at the decision-making table. In light of what will undoubtedly be new and unforeseen challenges ahead, I would prefer my specific proposals regarding the ARTery to be seen as a small contribution towards a much bigger conversation (still very much in its initial stages) about what social practice artists might need to help them take move forward into an altered world.

Moving Forward

1. What do we know?

The ARTery should... be a digital space that documents and showcases social artistic practice as it's happening and in all of its messiness...a highly specialized platform that either does one thing or is a "fully-fledged [...] project management tool" ... It should... offer a tailored and fully accessible experience to all users, fit into the wider ecology of social media platforms and digital tools without compromising on its unique vision, and combine the energy and excitement of Social Art Network meetups with the inspiration of the Social Art Library.

It could be...a blank sheet of paper/ an empty room / a spider-diagram / an interactive map / a place to nose around or collaborate and a space that that is fun and visually stimulating.

2. What should come next?

As the Social ARTery moves towards Phase 2 of its development, it is crucial that learning from Phase 1 is reflected upon and applied to ensure its ongoing growth and viability. In addition, the following aspects have been singled out for particular attention as it is felt that only by addressing them head-on will the platform be able to reach its full potential:

- *What do we mean when we talk about 'safe spaces'?:* Definitions of safe spaces vary hugely depending on the places in which they are created, and for whom. If this is not clearly stated, the term can cause confusion. It is clear that in the case of the ARTery, more must be done to establish a specific and working definition of what is meant by 'safe space'. This should then be both clearly communicated to users of the platform and translated into workable policies. Important questions to consider at this stage are: 1) whether the ARTery can claim to be a safe space for all users (regardless of age, for example), 2) where responsibility might lie (with Axis or users) if, for example, the integrity of the safe space was broken, 3) how Axis might communicate better (convince?) users, who have complex requirements regarding Data Safety, of the particular benefits of working on the ARTery with vulnerable audiences, and, 4) what clever mechanism or tools might the ARTery be able to implement that recreate real life safe spaces (within the main safe space of the ARTery), in which (for example) project facilitators might be able to 'check-in' with people with different needs.
- *Locked out of participation:* Although in many ways digital working may seem like an obvious and accessible solution when face-to-face working is no longer an option, digital poverty (whether technology, equipment and connectivity-related) is a real and prevalent problem in the UK, particularly among communities or groups who are already disadvantaged in the arts. More research is needed to find out who might

be excluded from using the ARTery and/or the possible inadvertent discrimination that may occur as a result of its development. As the platform evolves and changes in response to user feedback, and particularly as more users are onboarded, it is advisable that Axis thinks about what tools (such as how to videos or introductory forums) might be needed to ensure that people of all abilities are fully equipped with the necessary skills to navigate and make the most of the ARTery.

- *Collaboration is as collaboration does:* The important role of artists as advisors and co-producers, and the enthusiasm that this collaboration brings should be maintained beyond the first phase of the platform's development. Efforts should be made to respond to the Pioneers' and Social ARTery team's detailed feedback so that changes to the Social ARTery can be made in accordance with their varied needs and interests. Those who have been involved from the start of the project should be specifically shown how their opinions have shaped the platform moving forward and a conversation should be held to discuss how each party's responsibilities to one another and roles might change as the ARTery moves forward. As the platform membership grows, additional mechanisms could be created to ensure that whoever wishes to contribute to the site's evolution feels genuinely part of the process. One possible way of doing this might be via a rotating steering group made up of new and established members plus a member of the Social ARTery team.
- *A space for everyone?:* More clarity is needed regarding who the platform's future users will be so that different kinds of groups and individuals are catered for and their access needs are met. However, undoubtedly, decisions regarding whether the ARTery should be a space for "everyone" (a word which should be specifically defined within the context of the ARTery), or just for social practice artists are difficult to make without further research and consultation into the possible need for an ARTery-type space for non-artist users. Regardless, at this stage in the project the expertise of professionals such as a digital UX designer are required in order to fully address the most important criticism and recommendations made by artists regarding the usability of the platform.
- *Digital limits:* 'Zoom fatigue' and a general sense of digital oversaturation are symptoms of a larger social problem, which has emerged as a result of our shift into online worlds. It seems that in order for the ARTery to avoid becoming yet another online platform that people get fed up with, it should refrain from imitating those features that have already been identified as potentially responsible for exacerbating mental health problems. More specifically it must seek to facilitate (in playful, creative and unexpected ways), collaborations which feel immediate, meaningful and art-filled even though they are taking place remotely.

Glossary

Access

Working to overcome physical, social and cultural barriers to engagement or participation, and make space for different abilities and experiences.

Artist-led

Relating to processes, approaches and solutions in which artists are given agency to affect and influence decisions that affect them, or shape spaces that are designed for them.

BETA platform

Beta platform refers to a website that is undergoing testing and has not yet been officially launched. The beta phase follows the alpha phase, but precedes the final version. Software developers release beta versions of websites in order to collate useful feedback before releasing the final version.

Care

Awareness of and regard for the happiness and wellbeing of others, manifest through kind and compassionate actions or words.

Collaboration

Working with others to create or produce something.

Community

A group of people who hold something in common; whether a geographical area, an identity, interests or practices.

Co-production

The production of a piece of work - e.g. website, exhibition, performance, film - jointly with another person or a group of people.

Digital

Using or relating to computers and the internet.

Diversity

Differences among people in relation to their culture, identity, language and abilities.

Framework

The basic structure which supports an approach to an initiative (a project, an objective), and serves as a guide that can be adapted as required by adding or removing items.

Functionality

Functionality refers to whether a design works and helps the users meet their goals and needs. It encompasses everything from the actions a user can perform to dynamic content and interactivity.

Inclusion

The sharing of power, voice, responsibility and decision-making processes within a given context, which recognises the imbalances and tensions of these and seeks to challenge social inequalities.

Interface

The way in which information is made available to the user on the screen of a computer, smart phone etc.

Learnability

In web design, learnability is a measure of how easy a website is to learn, or how fast first-time visitors can complete tasks on a website. Learnability can be closely tied to the effectiveness of a website.

Live chat

A discussion in real-time between two people that involves sending messages over the internet.

Meetup

Artist-led spaces for creative practitioners to come together, share work, discuss challenges, explore new methods, and share ways of working.

Neuro-diverse

Referring to variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions.

Onboarding

In web design, onboarding is the process of integrating new users into a website. It often refers to a designed series of interactions and/or instructions that help the user ease into the platform's experience. It can be as simple as a greeting and an explanation or as complex as a series of guided tasks for users to complete.

Participation

Participation describes when people are involved in the production or creation of something, regardless of their skill level, such as making, doing or contributing ideas to a work of art. Participation can embrace a range of amateur, voluntary and professional practice.

Qualitative data

Qualitative information is descriptive and is usually written or expressed in other forms such as images or sound. It is often provided in response to questions such as 'how' or 'why'.

Quantitative data

Quantitative information is numerical and is usually expressed in numbers and quantities.

Social art, socially-engaged art, community arts and collaborative arts

Art that is collaborative, often participatory, and involves people as the medium or material of the work. It can include any art form which involves people and communities in debate, collaboration or social interaction.

Safe space

An inclusive and accessible space (either physical or online) committed to supporting harassment-free interactions for everyone, regardless of race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, age, religion, marital status, or any other identity marker.

Usability

In web design, usability is a measure of how well a specific user in a specific context can use a product/design to achieve a defined goal effectively, efficiently and satisfactorily.

UX (user experience) Designer

Designers measure and optimise applications (usually web based) to improve ease of use (usability), and create the best user experience by exploring many different approaches to solve end-users' problems.

(UX encompasses all aspects of the user's interaction with an organisation, its services, and its products.)

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Appendix 1

Key words selected by users to describe their feelings towards the Social ARTery, 1-2-1 Reflection Interviews



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Meeting of ACE Objectives, Criteria and Requirements	Associated Audiences (with ACE Segmentation)
<p>ARTery Groups and Community Members</p> <p>2020 Equality Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQ.1 Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/deaf workers, audiences and participants EQ.2 Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants EQ.3 Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions EQ.4 Address specific disadvantages facing Children and Young People and Older People as a result of Covid-19 EQ.5 Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. <p>Let's Create, 2020-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LC.1 Creative People LC.2 Cultural Communities LC.3 A Creative and Cultural Country <p>ACE Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AG.1 Reach more AG.2 Increase range and social diversity AG.3 Attract the least and less engaged AG.4 Increase depth and quality <p>Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AF.1 Widening access to high quality activity through increased opportunities for participation and active removal of barriers to engagement AF.2 More high-quality work reaching people with limited access to touring activity or infrastructure and/or places of least engagement AF.3 Exploration of innovative digital engagement and distribution models which attracts new audiences for creative and cultural activity AF.4 Establishing partnerships that will increase the commissioning and/or distribution of new work for more diverse audiences AF.5 Utilising using new technologies to develop new forms of creative and cultural content and ways of reaching audiences AF.6 Using international market development opportunities (for example, showcasing work from England internationally) to generate international bookings, collaborations and co-commissions with a longer-term impact on the resilience of a part of the sector in England, and/or on the range and quality of work available to audiences in England. 	<p>You Me the World and... (Take Stock Exchange). Anna Smith (Pioneer) Most recently focused in two London areas - Poplar and Barnet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Poplar programme worked with a deaf group and included a BSL video version of the podcast produced and captioned version. The Barnet programme worked with an inclusive theatre company (New Horizons 17-35) with members of various neuro-divergent and disability needs. EQ.1, AF.4 The project works with diverse groups to represent the specific area of London. Poplar - two Bengali community groups; LGBT Bengali group (Apongchor) and women's group (Zenana) based out of a Poplar estate. Also, the youth centre (Spotlight) supports young people, including those of ethnicity groups. Barnet - ex-hasid. EQ.2, EQ.4, AF.4 Within the workshops, questions are asked in regards to the area of which they live - conversations of racism come up. Anti-racism values are embedded in the way the projects work. EQ.3 Poplar - Spotlight youth centre talked about lockdown. Barnet - Barnet young careers. Conversations on lockdown and isolation but workshops themselves are not covid response. By default all projects work with youth or children groups. EQ.4, AF.4 Workshops always work with those who may not have been involved in an arts project previously, largely from low economic backgrounds - making up at least 50% of participants, including refugee groups. Audience engagement priority is focused on unengaged audiences, with the end of project celebration often the first time people visit an arts space. EQ.5 Workshops facilitate conversations that don't overtly put pressure on people to tell their stories but does encourage them to express themselves. Youth workshops are slightly more focused on a storytelling experience. Second part of the project is the re-meet with audiences and sharing the stories heard elsewhere in workshops which further evoke responses. Finally, a performance and community meal to share everyone's experiences and stories, current through podcasts. Podcasts include the stories and conversations from within the workshops. LC.1, AF.1, AF.2, AF.3 Often the first experience of participating within an arts project for people and often the first connection people may have with their local arts space, often building a relationship between group leaders and the arts institution; lays groundwork for future work. Workshops open access for people, which is continued after the project has left. Workshops are bespoke to the communities, meeting them where they're at - a sense of ownership over the process and the art that's created as a result of it. AG.1, AG.3, AF.1, AF.2 Brings skills of storytellers, facilitators and listeners then the material comes from the conversations had with people that attend. LC.2 Tries to reach a broader span of people as possible - as young as 7/8 years old up to the elderly; as diverse a cross section of the community as possible, working across 12 groups. AG.1, AG.2, AG.3 Currently working with a housing association to develop resident led strategy. AF.2 Podcasts - having their experiences shared in a podcast would have been a first for many within the communities. For some, participating online with the project would have been the first time. Created a different online experience than some would have been used to, a different interaction. Using zoom and Whatsapp for workshops and having phone calls with participants who couldn't access the internet. AF.3, AF.5 Participants will have diverse international backgrounds - with conversations being had surrounding migration. The project purpose is to share personal and micro experiences, interacting with each other and the wide world. Podcasts can be heard internationally, previously only live workshops. The stories told could do more now, digested by people in a variety of different way and can inform wider changes. Voices can be heard that previously weren't, including by people in positions in power. The movement to a recorded document from the project has the potential to reach more. The digital nature of the project currently presents exciting opportunities for the impact of the work. AF.3, AF.5, AF.6 <p>Youth Landscapers Collective (Jo Wheeler - Pioneer) 12 young people will be invited to take part EQ.4- needs more info</p>

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Breakdown Bolton Community + Manchester College LC.2, LC.3 – needs more info

Preston Street Union 'Instructions to Live By' LC.2, LC.3

- As an off-shoot of our project, one of our members introduced our process to a Community Organisation (disability). **EQ.1**
- In a very general sense, the ongoing project 'Instructions To Live By' seeks to find ways to enhance well-being in a light-touch way. We are in the process of stimulating encounters with strangers of all ages through the use of posters in the streets of Exeter. 'Messages' on our 'Instructions To Live By' posters are light and unexpected, aimed at momentarily brightening someone's day. **AG.1, AG.2, AG.3, AF.1, AF.2**
- One aspect of our project is communicating with others, including our own group membership, on Zoom or from either side of a window using whiteboards. The process invites participants to choose content for the whiteboards intuitively, creating a whole new narrative in combination with other participants. personal creativity. **AF.3**
- The project on Social Artery has been aimed at keeping the collaborative community that is Preston Street Union alive and kicking during lockdown. It has succeeded in this, as well as this, it begun to develop processes to reach out into the wider community. **AF.3, AF.4, AF.5**

Monuments, Plinths, Memorials (J Harrington, J Booth)

- Both Pioneers identify as disabled, neuro-divergent and/or D/deaf **EQ.1**
- Participants included - Sile (Zimbabwean ethnicity), Yuen (British-Chinese), Maria (Brazilian), Zoyander (White Eastern European ethnicity), In audience: Portuguese, Russian, and others (not included as not self-identified). **EQ.2**
- Plans discussed to share the work through a residency of a retail unit in Scarborough and SEAS Brighton space. **AF.3**

Use of the Social ARTery platform. AF.1, AF.2, AF.3, AF.4, AF.5

- Use the programme to direct online activity from other platforms to the Social ARTery.
- Establish conversation threads which have the potential to feed into the programme and zine. **AG.4**
- Trial the live use of project material on the platform.
- Provide the zine as 'public' content on the platform: Extend the reach of the platform by bringing a number of Sheffield city region based artists, as well as communities and professionals within and on the periphery of socially engaged art. **LC.1, LC.3**

Engaging with

- People which have a socially engaged / collaborative / co-authoring / performative practice **LC.1, AG.4**
- People engaging with social issue pertinent to monuments, memorial, plinths (direct reference to Black Lives Matter and decolonisation) **EQ.3, LC.1, AG.4**
- Artists engage with themes relating to monuments: histories, futures, heritage, identity - Communities involved in discourse and action around monuments and memorial - 'Activist' individuals and groups. (direct reference to Black Lives Matter and decolonisation) **EQ.3, LC.1**

Invited Groups and Organisations AF.1, AF.2, AF.4

- Social Art Network Sheffield meetup - initial plans for events shared, and opportunity for feedback and involvement with the wider network **LC.1, LC.2, LC.3, AG.4**
- Friends of Edward Carpenter Community Organisations **LC.2**
- Rotherham Social Services and Virtual School Creative Mentors Hive **EQ.4, EQ.5, LC.3** (one to one with young people and staff training session arranged).

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- Pitsmoor Adventure Playground - Youth organisation well embedded in community, regularly engaging with artists and arts organisations. **LC.1, LC.2, LC.3, EQ.4** (initial conversations - submission of postcards and contribution to zoom).
- Grimm & Co (A youth group in partnership with University of Derby) **LC.3, EQ.4**
- Youth & Play schemes Rotherham **EQ.4, LC.3** (initial postcards sent and building relationships)
- FLUX, Rotherham. **LC.3** (email and phone correspondents - project on hold)
- Sheffield Crisis : Homeless Art project 'Search Light' - Wentworth Woodhouse Historic House, Rotherham **EQ.5, LC.1, LC.3, AG.3** (waiting on correspondence - crisis in art project)
- Green Top Circus (Sheffield) - video response to monument and memorial provocations (being transcribed).
- Artcore Derby (David Gilbert) - Memorial Postcard - made, designed and sold postcards for COVID-19 victims. Initiated and ran separately but happy to share postcards to Monuments and Memorials.
- Artist Networks and Studios: **LC.1, LC.2, LC.3**
 - Replicast Studios (submissions)
 - ROAR (Rotherham) (submissions)
 - Yorkshire Artspace (in communication)
 - Trafalgar & Albyn Works (no correspondence as yet)
 - Bloc Studios, CADS, Kiac Studios (in communication - sent out to artists)
 - Doncaster Arts (no correspondence as yet)
 - Cupola Gallery Artists - Private Commercial Gallery (supportive, 15K on mailing and collecting postage postcards). Artists visiting gallery who have not previous. Space offered to display postcards.
 - Sidney & Malida Creative Space Artist
 - Frontier Gallery Artists
 - Students
 - Sheffield Hallam Art Students (currently working on theme of Monuments) (correspondence through Site Gallery and through Joanna Lee (Head of Graphics)) **EQ.4**
 - Thomas Rotherham sixth form College and RCAT Rotherham College (McCarthy set up independent performance company C.I.C (Left Artists - left out, left wing, left alone) and tutor on performance) **EQ.4**

Come to the Table

- A social research project trialling ways to improve discussion methodologies across sectors and communities, whilst contributing to professional development. **LC.1, LC.2, AF.1, AG.1, AG.2, AG.4**
- Anticipated that the participants will contribute in the art making process of conversing, writing recipes and/or drawing/illustrating. **LC.1, AF.1, AG.4**
- The endeavour is to engage with multiple cultural backgrounds, bringing variety and conversations about culture generally and not specifically targeting an art audience. **LC.2, AG.1, AG.2, AG.3, EQ.5**
- To support people that may have health and social anxieties around food and online conversation but have little option in terms of a social scene to join in. **AF.1, AG.1, AG.2, AG.3**
- Genuinely co-produced artwork, enabling exchanges within the event to facilitate a general audience to be included into and be a part of this community. **LC.1, AF.1, AG.4**
- Some participants disclosed mental health issues, sessions were not recorded so people could speak openly. Poor mental health prevented some from attending but the project provided other means for them to engage. **EQ.1**
- Participants were encouraged to join in sessions as they saw fit - sharing experiences with others or through the sharing of recipes. **AF.1**
- The digital experience of the project was designed around the idea of 'conversations around a dinner table'. Each event had an individual ebb and flow that participants directed, with no set agenda. Conversations about people's dish may have led on to issues

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around society and academia, political conversations sometimes very quickly, other times very conversation remained very lightheaded. [AF.3](#)
The current partnership between Oli and Alice came about from a crossover in practice. [AF.4](#)

Cath Colour Carver (Pioneer)

- Practice includes public space transformation through art and installations, chromatic research with citizens, colour talks and workshops, DJ and radio host, curator and producer of art and music events, photography and videography, and interdisciplinary spatial design. [LC.1](#), [AG.4](#), [AF.1](#)
- Collaborations include: V&A Late x Commune, Museum of Colours, Hackney WickED, Shuffle Festival, PatternNation, Well Street Market E9, Hackney New School, Sense, Camille Walala, Wumzum, The Cause, Threads Radio and Netil Radio. [LC.1](#), [LC.2](#), [AF.4](#)

COLOURWORXX Club.

- A regular opportunity for artists, creatives and design professionals to join together in a focused way to explore the topics at the heart of COLOURWORXX. [LC.1](#), [LC.2](#)
- The main aims of the COLOURWORXX Club are to connect artists and foster genuine community across borders, between cities and through screens. and provide an outlet for discussion and sharing of many voices. [LC.1](#), [LC.2](#), [LC.3](#), [AG.4](#)
- Within the current stable of collaborators, we count visual artists, photographers, gamers, architects, academics, researchers, illustrators, designers, social artists, street artists, educators, event organisers, DJs, musicians, party promoters, curators and writers. I expect international participants, including people we have worked with before, such as the Museum of Colours Berlin and PatternNation based in Cape Town, as well as a large community in the UK. [LC.1](#), [LC.2](#), [AF.6](#)

enSHRINE

Led by a disabled artist and two disabled co-authors, aged 18-52 from British Chinese, British Punjabi and Black British backgrounds, the project is specifically about creating anti-racist policy through workshops. Policies are created to support everyday creativity, to build intimacy, empathy and enthusiasm through mutual support. [EQ.1](#), [EQ.2](#), [EQ.3](#), [LC.1](#), [AF.5](#)

Food Waste and Storytelling (Kaajal Modi - Pioneer).

- Food Waste and Storytelling was a collaboration between Kaajal Modi and Fatima (**WHO?**) of Nigerian and **KAJAL'S BACKGROUND?** backgrounds. Participants were invited from countries whose culture has been shaped by colonialism. Many were from migrant households (North Indian, Dutch Caribbean, Iranian Canadian, Puruvian, Sundanese and Zimbabwean) and found their cultural practices a stark contrast to UK culture which included methods of food preservation and attitudes towards food waste in the home. Two notable communities who participated in this project included a Bristol based Samarli community and East London Bangladeshi community. [EQ.2](#), [LC.2](#), [AG.2](#), [AG.3](#)
- The programme didn't directly address issues of race however it provided natural to speak about racism when discussing migration. this included interesting conversations about racism between different ethnic background of which weren't white. There was a community agreement signed by all participants at the start of the programme. [EQ.3](#)
- Working with older women was a focus for the project with methods built into delivery to increase access for those with physical impairments. The mental health of the elderly involved, during isolation periods, was an important consideration for Fatima who has previous experience working in nursing. A young person was involved as a translator. [EQ.4](#)
- A syllabus was created to work especially with people who were not sharing their experiences through creativity. Activities were set to bring out creativity and develop their own recipes that drew from the other cultures they learnt about. A Samarli poet became a collaborator who encouraged

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	<p>many of the participants to write their own poems. A majority of participants had no previous experience working within an arts project. LC.1, LC.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whatsapp was used to share recipes, articles and ideas which developed a sense of collaboration between sessions, which took place every week for six weeks. Sessions encouraged community through learning and sharing personal experiences intergenerationally and interculturally - a cultural encounter. AF.1, AF.3, AF.5 • Reaching more people by conducting the project within existing community spaces (allowing for a feeling of safety for participants) was a focus of the project - held in community centres. There is current experimentation into the option of running the project within people's homes. LC.2, AF.2 • The project moved digitally during late 2020-early 2021 to Zoom. The project began paying participants for their time and use of their own equipment and foods at home. Some participants were not comfortable using zoom or new technology however Whatsapp and Instagram were used because these platforms were familiar for many, with participants often using these to message family in different countries. AF.1, AF.3, AF.5 • The project gained the partnership of the Eden project - Cornwall and is currently working with Arts Catalyst to develop a thesis on the project. AF.4 • In 2021, the project is in talks with the Asian Arts Network about a collaboration in the future. AF.6 (anticipated). <p>Play The Game (Rik Fisher - Pioneer) AF.1, AF.6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial first meeting of the project covered a respect and safer space policy, creating an open and accessible space. Some of the activities set for participants covered subjectivities, identifying how experiences may vary. • Partners sought included a LGBT+ foundation and a refugee action group however, neither progressed to fruition. • Participants ranged from ages 20 - 55, of mixed gender (assumed), with three participants being located in The Netherlands.
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<p>Axis Members</p> <p>2020 Equality Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/ deaf workers, audiences and participants • Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants • Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions • Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. <p>Let's Create, 2020-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People • Cultural Communities • A Creative and Cultural Country <p>ACE Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach more • Increase range and social diversity • Attract the least and less engaged • Increase depth and quality 	<p>Creative Practitioners</p> <p>Arts Professionals</p> <p>Disabled</p> <p>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic</p> <p>Lower socio- economic background</p> <p>Hard to Reach</p>	
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<p>Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening access to high quality activity through increased opportunities for participation and active removal of barriers to engagement • More high-quality work reaching people with limited access to touring activity or infrastructure and/or places of least engagement • Exploration of innovative digital engagement and distribution models which attracts new audiences for creative and cultural activity • Establishing partnerships that will increase the commissioning and/or distribution of new work for more diverse audiences • Utilising using new technologies to develop new forms of creative and cultural content and ways of reaching audiences 		
<p>SAN Members</p> <p>2020 Equality Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/ deaf workers, audiences and participants • Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants • Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions • Address specific disadvantages facing Children and Young People and Older People as a result of Covid-19 • Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. <p>Let's Create, 2020-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People • Cultural Communities • A Creative and Cultural Country <p>ACE Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach more • Increase range and social diversity • Attract the least and less engaged • Increase depth and quality 	<p>Creative Practitioners</p> <p>Arts Professionals</p> <p>Disabled</p> <p>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic</p> <p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Lower socio- economic backgrounds</p> <p>Hard to Reach</p> <p>International</p>	

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<p>SAN Partner Organisations</p> <p>2020 Equality Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/ deaf workers, audiences and participants • Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants • Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions • Address specific disadvantages facing Children and Young People and Older People as a result of Covid-19 • Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. <p>Let's Create, 2020-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People • Cultural Communities • A Creative and Cultural Country <p>ACE Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach more • Increase range and social diversity • Attract the least and less engaged • Increase depth and quality 	<p>Creative Practitioners Bath- co-creation Plymouth Newcastle Nottingham</p> <p>Arts Professionals Plymouth Newcastle Nottingham</p> <p>Disabled Brighton</p> <p>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Brighton – Migrant and refugee</p> <p>Children and Young People Bristol Sheffield</p> <p>Lower socio- economic backgrounds Geographical Sheffield RESEARCH CENUS DATA</p> <p>Hard to Reach and/or Unengaged Plymouth</p>	

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<p>AXIS Partner Organisations???</p> <p>2020 Equality Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/ deaf workers, audiences and participants • Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants • Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions • Address specific disadvantages facing Children and Young People and Older People as a result of Covid-19 • Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. <p>Let's Create, 2020-2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People • Cultural Communities • A Creative and Cultural Country <p>ACE Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach more • Increase range and social diversity • Attract the least and less engaged • Increase depth and quality 	<p>Creative Practitioners</p> <p>Arts Professionals</p> <p>Disabled</p> <p>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic</p> <p>Children and Young People</p> <p>Lower socio- economic backgrounds</p> <p>Hard to Reach</p> <p>International</p>	

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2020 Equality Objectives

- Improving access to the sector for disabled, neuro-divergent and D/deaf workers, audiences and participants
- Ensure funded organisations and projects improve and can demonstrate meaningful engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workers, audiences and participants
- Challenging racism and embedding anti-racism values across all of the Arts Council's policy and funding decisions
- Address specific disadvantages facing Children and Young People and Older People as a result of Covid-19
- Improving access to creative and cultural activities to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Let's Create, 2020-2030

- Creative People
- Cultural Communities
- A Creative and Cultural Country

ACE Goal 2

- Reach more
- Increase range and social diversity
- Attract the least and less engaged
- Increase depth and quality

Areas of Focus

- Widening access to high quality activity through increased opportunities for participation and active removal of barriers to engagement
- More high-quality work reaching people with limited access to touring activity or infrastructure and/or places of least engagement
- Exploration of innovative digital engagement and distribution models which attracts new audiences for creative and cultural activity
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Mention here that the work of axis etc etc is focused around artists and so this supporting document begins with a breakdown of this 'audience'

Creative Practitioners and Arts Professionals

N.B arts professionals are defined as those working within the industry but who are not, or who are in addition to being, a creative practitioner. I.e. curators, programmers, practitioners, producers.

1.1 Overview

- Liberal
- Engage within the arts on a weekly basis
- Good prospects for new and innovative work; see the arts as exciting and allows for them to think differently about life
- Demanding but rewarding professions
- Highly educated, either formally or self-taught
- Wide variety of interests outside the arts
- Mixed age range, some with children
- Competition for their attention is high
- Confident in their own knowledge and tastes; expect this to be addressed accordingly
- Recommendations from this segment may influence less confident segments
- Best prospect for digital art due to confidence in technology

1.1.1 Young Adults (18-24)

Younger adults within this segment are likely to still be establishing their own opinions and developing their knowledge of contemporary arts. Due to this, they may not be as discerning with their tastes; more interested in the visual appeal of the work. However, as with the segment as a whole, an insight into the creative process will be highly engaging and may be seen as an opportunity to further their own creative practice.

The partnerships with ***** and their educational work will provide an opportunity to engage a young, although not fully established, arts professional audience.

1.1.2 Adults (24+)

Those within the segment, 24+, will be extremely clear on their preferences. The more established will be highly demanding and highly sceptical of new work. They will still enjoy access to the creative process, however, will require something new to intellectually stimulate them.

1.2 Connecting with a Contemporary Arts Segment

- Must be supplied with information and choices; allowed to make their own decisions based on this.
- Respond best to well-targeted, niche and interactive direct communications that recognise their refined interests.
- Respond extremely well to opportunities to be seen as well-informed and will recommend and share experiences with others; a useful influencer opportunity through online reviews, tweets and social media engagement that may extend to under engaged audiences.
- Main challenge connecting with this segment will be the competitions from other cultural offerings; their desire for novelty may be the deciding factor.
- Key message is highly crucial, positioning the offer as cutting edge with an opportunity for self-expression and/or challenging of ideas/beliefs.
- Active within several arts professional networks.

1.3 Building a Cultural Experience

- An offering must feed into their identity; challenging them intellectually and influencing the way they see the world. This segment is confident in their knowledge and preferences.
- The opportunity to share an experience with 'the group'; others that they identify as being part of – high-levels of education, well-paid jobs, liberal outlook and active lifestyles, will be the most exciting. will certainly have a specific 'group' in which they are active participants.
- The offering must be presented as experimental work, often obscure or niche, and must be of a depth as to match the audience's highly developed critical opinions; they can be demanding of a cultural experience.
- As innovators, the opening of the creative process is essential for this segment and will lead to long-term success; if a good opinion is formed during the early stages. The opportunity to reflect upon their own creative process through the work of others will be highly desirable, mirroring the sharing of professional practice that is essential within the industry.
- The experience must build upon their 'arts attendance badge'; an opportunity to be recognised as an avid cultural participant; novelty may be a greater persuader than artistic merit.

1.4 Barriers to Participation

- This segment has few and low barriers to participation, unafraid of partaking in challenging artistic offerings. However, a failure to recognise their niche preferences and habits will turn off this audience.

1.5 Multiverse Approach

1.5.1 Awareness.

- The offering must be seen to be highly niche, challenging and feeds confidence in their knowledge and tastes.
- The most effective channels will be digital, with a highly targeted key message (an opportunity for self-expression and/or challenging of ideas/beliefs), that is not perceived as overt advertising.

1.5.2 Choice and Decisions

- This segment is already overwhelmed with cultural opinions, likely receiving many email newsletters and updates via social media.
- They must be presented with information and allowed to make the decision themselves.
- Choices are most likely to be made based upon the opportunity to engage with experimental, niche work (sharing the experience with others that are demanding and culturally aware) which allows for them to be perceived as 'culturally elite'.

1.5.3 Emotional Journey

- For this segment the emotional journey should begin during the creative process, allowing the segment to witness and comment as the work develops. This opportunity that 'mirrors' their own creative process is highly engaging, as is the chance to discuss the work directly with the artist. Seeing the work come into fruition will be highly rewarding for this segment.

1.5.4 Figurative Arrival

- This segment will approach new initiatives wanting to be challenged and with the hope it'll fill gaps in the industry, yet with a scepticism that it will.
- Due to their highly developed critical opinions, work should be direct in its message and benefit.

1.6 COVID-19 Considerations

Many will be trying to navigate a changing industry. Many will have been furloughed or will have lost a regular income. Without a doubt, they will be seeking a continuation of their previous arts attendance and/or involvement within the industry; and due to their existing high use and ability to engage digital, will have 'moved' online. Many will be seeking new opportunities for their work digital, some with a high degree of anxiety due to the loss of income.