



## **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT AND ACTION PLAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“In the studio, in the seminar room, in the lecture theatre, in the canteen, in the museum, in the gallery, in the street, in the journals, in the books, in the broadsheets, in the tabloids, in the broadcast media, online and off. All these spaces”, artist susan pui san lok proposed in 2020, “demand that we challenge our everyday interactions, our habitual, disciplinary norms, call out unconscious biases, resist the urge to draw lines, do everything to decentre and resituate ourselves as unconditional allies.”

Such calls for change relate not only to institutional frameworks, but also to the intellectual structures according to which our discipline operates. As the national subject association, we recognise the need to include our own organisation in such efforts. Our statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the related Action Plan Outline explain why the Association for Art History believes these issues are important and urgently need our attention, provide what we intend to do and how we will be accountable for expediting change.

### **WHY WE ARE TAKING ACTION**

The vision of the Association for Art History is for a world in which art history thrives and through this we gain a deeper understanding of art and human culture.

These aspirations are founded on the belief that in order for our subject to thrive, it must be broad and inclusive, enabling people to think differently about art, themselves, others and the world around them. As such, incorporating equality, diversity and inclusion principles into our work is essential to achieve our objectives for the Association and for art history.

In pursuing our mission—to lead the collective effort in the UK to facilitate the study and practice of art history—we have a responsibility to ask challenging and sometimes difficult questions of our subject, of our organisation and of our audiences. The answers to such questions sometimes present us with uncomfortable truths about the systems and structures that have shaped art through history, and by extension the issues confronting society and the experiences lived by individuals. These truths illustrate the gap between the intentions of our vision and people’s perceptions of our field and whether they think there is a place for them within it.

### **THE ISSUES IN OUR FIELD**

To bridge this gap, we must continue to acknowledge both the historical and present-day barriers that people encounter in the field of art history, and the broader context in which our work is being undertaken. Historically, many systemic inequalities in our subject were created, and perpetuated, by dominant, Western and Eurocentric narratives told by, as well as about, people of privilege which led to an exclusive and limited canon in art history and in institutional collections alike. Over the last fifty or so years and with increasing momentum and profile, these narratives shifted, and additional perspectives of artists, art historians and subjects have enriched an expanding canon which continues to evolve. However, it is clear from the renewed prominence that the Black Lives Matter movement gained from the events of 2020 and from the needs (and frustration) expressed by those who have been marginalized—within society and within education institutions, museums and galleries—that we must act with more urgency to make our subject more accessible, to decolonise it and promote anti-racism.

With this history and these events in mind, it is therefore essential that the Association considers its own practices in order to ensure that we work to change art-historical narratives, and better incorporate within them the voices that have too often been excluded from the subject. This desire is reflected in the first of our core values— inclusivity—as articulated in our current Strategic Plan. Among other things, this means that we will continue to reach more audiences from beyond our traditional areas of scholarship, readership and involvement. While the Association has made progress towards achieving this aspiration, we acknowledge that we have more work to do to put inclusivity, equality and diversity at the heart of what our subject association does.

We are aware of the challenges presented in our field, of the lack of diversity reflected among those who study, teach, research and practice art history, and in those who are involved with the Association. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan seeks to redress these imbalances with more immediate steps in 2021, and with measures in our next three-year strategy of 2022-24.

### **WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO**

The two aims of our EDI work are to reduce obstacles that exist to engage with art history and to address the inequalities which underpin the intellectual and institutional structures of the discipline. Obstacles to engagement may derive from personal circumstance or characteristics, including both those provided for in the Equalities Act of 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.), and those that are not, such as class.

To achieve our aims, we will strive to increase participation from those who face barriers to engaging with art history, both within our own Association and in the broader subject. We realise that it will be more effective if we focus our efforts on the barriers which most commonly and perniciously affect our field: class, race/ethnicity, and gender. We will also work to ensure that our programme and subject are accessible to D/deaf and disabled people by creating accessible content and communications materials.

We will continue to prioritise a programme and advocacy efforts which address the inequalities in our discipline and better promote an art history that is both expanded in outlook and self-reflexive in approach.

### **HOW WE ARE GOING TO DO IT**

We will take an intersectional approach to furthering equality, diversity and inclusion at the Association and in the subject, acknowledging where these attributes are combined and cumulative, and that they do not exist in isolation from each other. At the same time, we will work to ensure that our programme more prominently features different perspectives from within our field so that art histories are reflective of and relevant to people from all parts of the world and with varying experience and circumstance.

By its nature, this work must be done in partnership with our communities of stakeholders and partners within education, the museum and gallery sector, with cognate subject association and learned societies and with those who have been traditionally excluded from our subject. Our shared learning will help to inform and improve the efficacy of all of our ongoing efforts with regards to people and institutions which engage and are involved in art history.

Through our EDI action plan we will assess where we are now relative to our aspirations for change; establish objectives to achieve the desired results; regularly monitor progress; and share this, along with identified challenges and learning, with internal and external stakeholders. We will give updates on our plans via our website and communications to our members and others in our various communities. We will publish more formal assessments of our progress and challenges on an annual basis and make this information widely available to facilitate our accountability and encourage dialogue.

We are aware that this work takes time and resourcing. As such, we will commit internal resources and seek external funding for programmes or actions where necessary to help achieve our goals.

## **EDI ACTION PLAN OUTLINE**

Included in our plan are tangible steps to integrate EDI commitments in all aspects of our work and to reflect our anti-racist mindset and aspiration throughout the Association. Our EDI Action Plan will be organised in three areas: our organisation, our audiences and our programme. Each will involve a degree of monitoring in order to set achievable objectives for our work into the future. All collection of data will be in strict confidence and the reporting of such data will be done in aggregate without identification of or reference to individuals. This plan is a prospective one and, as such will only reference work we have done to date when it is necessary to do so for context.

### **OUR ORGANISATION**

The Association is committed to ensuring that our staff, our boards and our committees represent the populations we work within and serve. In order to do this, we will first assess and record the levels of diversity then establish objectives for each of these three segments individually, (eg., by committee) and collectively.

- To establish a baseline against which we will measure our EDI efforts, we will expand our current monitoring and data gathering to include all of our stakeholders who volunteer for the Association and those who apply for volunteer and paid posts, grants and awards.
- We will provide ongoing training for staff, board and committees as needed in the preparation of our Action Plan and as the plan is being carried out.

### **OUR COMMUNITIES**

We will make efforts towards improving the representation of those in our identified areas of focus within our membership, applicants to grants and awards, journal submissions, programme participation and those within our field more broadly.

- We will establish procedures for monitoring memberships and those participating in and attending programmes. After sufficient data has been collected, we will set objectives in these areas.
- We will create guidelines for communications to members and other audiences that make our digital and print information as accessible as possible and review our membership application process to ensure it is inclusive, facilitating participation from all of our intended communities.
- We will raise the profile of our EDI work with a dedicated space on an accessible website which may include blog updates, successes stories of interest and relevant opportunities.
- We will work with partners in the HE sector to help facilitate efforts to attract an undergraduate cohort of students that is more representative of wider society in terms of ethnicity, gender and class backgrounds.
- We will contribute to efforts with external partner organisations and individuals who are working to integrate EDI principles into the work of those in the museum and galleries sectors who engage with art history.
- We will establish a caucus with the Association or in combination with other cognate subject associations to serve as a forum to help assess and provide helpful learning on best practice, guidelines, highlight existing resources, provide opportunities for listening, challenge us and outline ways within various sectors and communities which our efforts at increasing accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion can be most effective.

### **OUR PROGRAMME**

The form and content of our events and initiatives will include a broad range of voices and viewpoints, and we will implement measures to make our programme widely accessible.

- We will review our programmes of 2019, 2020 and 2021 and set objectives to ensure that our forthcoming series of events advance broad and inclusive art histories and include participants who are best placed to do so.
- We will continue to use our journal, *Art History*, as a space for publishing material of strategic importance, building on the current editorial vision of foregrounding critical race

theory within the discipline of art history. We will redouble our efforts to encourage increased Global South content and participation in the journal.

- We will continue to develop our Resource Portal on Anti-Racism and Decolonial Approaches to Art History and Visual Culture through changing the format to an interactive one and thereby facilitating additions and broader participation from within the field.

- We will work with partners in the Education sector to introduce inclusive art histories and to help decolonise the subject at pre-university levels.

- We will create guidelines for accessible programming around events, including our Annual Conference.