ASSOCIATION FOR ART HISTORY

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Outline

Progress Report 2024

Our EDI Action Plan included the commitment to report to our stakeholders and the wider community on our progress on an annual basis. This report summarises challenges and achievements in the third year of our three-year plan (2022-2024).

The two strategic aims of the plan are to 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. This update includes our broader objectives which support these aims and is structured around the areas of focus for our activities which include: our organisation, our communities and our programmes.

Our Organisation

We have put in place regular EDI monitoring of our board, staff, volunteers and those who apply for volunteer and paid posts. Forms were most recently circulated in autumn 2023; we will conduct the monitoring every year and a half with new forms going out in the spring of 2025. Filling out the monitoring forms is voluntary; as such, our results are based on those who have chosen to take part. The last monitoring exercise showed that while progress has been made with some volunteer committees (notably the Doctoral and Early Career Research Committee and the International Advisory Board) progress still needs to be made with other committees including our Higher Education and Curatorial Committees among others and on the small staff team. Diversity in all its forms is taken into consideration when recruiting committee members and it will continue to remain a priority.

In early 2025, the staff team was provided with refresher training on EDI from a consultant with whom we had worked in the past. We will now conduct this training on an annual basis.

Our Communities

The AAH's EDI efforts are focused mainly on race/ethnicity and class with attention to disability, where it represents a barrier to engaging with our subject. Our approach concerns potential students with backgrounds which create particular challenges to learning or studying art history.

In 2024, the Association accessed data on the socio-economic strata, i.e.'class' of students taking art history at university, as well as other subjects within and outside of the arts and humanities. The data shows stark imbalances within art history, as well as other arts and humanities subjects, with strong uptake from those at the upper end of the socio-economic scale, and a poor uptake from those among the lower strata. Whilst this was not wholly unexpected, it was troubling nonetheless to see the hard data. It clearly demonstrated that 'class' is the biggest indicator of whether an individual will opt to take a

humanities subject at university. For example, where there is racial/ethnic diversity in the student population, it is composed of students from the middle classes. Similarly, most students who take our subject at university are women, but where there is more gender diversity it is, again, among men from the middle classes.

In response to the data and other evidence we have gathered, the AAH set up a task force of those working in various sectors in the arts to help us determine the best way to help address the class imbalance with the expectation that reducing barriers among the students in lower socio-economic strata will also aid with those with protected characteristics and life circumstances such as race/ethnicity/gender/location within the UK.

After initial meetings of the task force we determined that we would focus our efforts on three areas: primary school education, university education and on graduates entering the work force. For life-long benefit, we believe that introducing art history into primary schools of those in disadvantaged areas will have the greatest impact on diversifying our subject. We are now conducting research on the type of resources for primary school teachers will be most effective. We will have four consultative meetings over 2025 with the goal of producing a pilot resource in early 2026.

EDI monitoring of submissions to and articles published in our journal, *Art History*, has shown that we have work to do to diversify the pool of authors in both of these categories. In order to encourage a broader range of book reviewers in the journal, we tested a programme of offering fees for book reviewers who do not have institutional affiliation. This two-year trial did not result in increasing participation from among our intended communities. In 2025 our editorial team will consider alternative strategies to foster commissions from a wider range of reviewers.

Our Programme

Our EDI policy provides that the content of our events and initiatives will include a broad range of voices and viewpoints and that they will advance broad and inclusive art histories and include participants who are best placed to do so.

We have refined and standardised our monitoring across our organisation to analyse programme and event data to create baselines again which we measure our EDI efforts, and we have established objectives to ensure that at least 15% of those attending and 20% presenting at our events are from backgrounds/characteristics featured in our plan including race/ethnicity, class and gender. For all of our events, we have created guidelines for accessible programming to ensure that we continue to reduce barriers to participation.

Completing monitoring forms is voluntary and the data we have collected does not allow us to reliably report on speakers across our entire programme. We are, however, able to report on the content of our programme in 2024, 45% of which was focused on work from the global majority or that which involved issues of race, class, sexual preference and gender identity. This is up from 35% in 2023 and is triple our goal of 15% for our programme as a whole.

In 2023 we installed a new International Advisory Board, representing a much more diverse group of scholars, in particular those from non-Anglophone countries. One expectation of this group is that they will help to encourage submissions from a broader range of authors than is currently reflected in submissions to our journal. We expected that this type of effort would take more than one year to show the kinds of results that we would like to see in submissions to our journal. We assessed progress at the end of 2024 and have still not achieved the results we would have liked. Work will continue in 2025 to ascertain how we might adjust our approach to bring in a broader group of authors.