



Mandate Event: CAMPUS Talks Elvira Dyangani Ose + Attendance at CAMPUS Independent Study Group

Hosted By: Bonnington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University

Date: 14-16 November 2019

SCAN Mandate Attendees: Aniela Piasecka, Artist

What did you learn and why is it important for the visual arts sector?

The crux of the collective research undertaken at Nottingham Contemporary with Elvira Dyangani Ose centered itself around the idea of curation as an act of resistance or dissent. This seemed like a pertinent premise with regards the visual art sector: conversations revolved around representation, physical and or conceptual interventions against pervasive norms and overcoming the phenomenon of the autobiography as 'currency' whilst also presenting personal truths.

Five 'take aways' from the day were:

- 1) It is imperative that marginalised groups are allowed to formulate their own conceptions of their identities - we are all experts of our our own experiences. Resist box ticking and categorisations, give people the chance to use their own words to define their realities.*
- 2) Africanism must not be defined by the West. This becomes complicated with the diaspora in view. Frantz Fanon offers a way forward in *The Wretched of the Earth*.*
- 3) It is important for individuals to find their own voices within institutions. Institutions are made of individuals but the 'institutional voice' can sometimes overwhelm those same individuals. The institution must always be questioned alongside individual positioning within it.*
- 4) Care is central - in curation, in art production, within institutions. If the institution can't provide that care, individuals must find ways to find it in themselves.*

5) *Curators must not only work with individual artists, they must engage with art scenes, collectives, groups; attempting to disrupt the 19th century bourgeois construct of individualism.*

Was there anything to note from the event that you think would help us to drive forward our manifesto demands?

Discussions surrounding empathy, care, boundaries.

Caring comes down to empathy, when working one must always attempt empathy. The 'unsaid' is always going to be present - and should be. Never assume anything about the individual and/or group one is working with. There is no formula for care, it is active and always negotiating itself, and sometimes requires compromise. It takes time, effort, awareness and these things must always be encouraged. There is no simple fix. Care is choosing content and being mindful that certain content can be more harmful to some than others. Codes of conduct important in the workplace.

What did you contribute to workshops, open sessions or feedback opportunities?

My contribution concerned the 'tyranny of participation' and my inputs into the discussions tended towards a more cautious way of approaching collective endeavours. Boundaries must be drawn by individuals and must not require explanation. Each individual is responsible for their own actions but must be aware of their effect on others. It also seemed important to me to discuss access needs in the context of a conference. The three working days were very long, with uninterrupted periods of sitting, which I found difficult to manage with my chronic pain condition. On the last day, parameters were put in place to make the space of the conference more sympathetic to the individual abilities and needs within the group.

What will you do next or differently as a result of attending the event?

I think a major shift has occurred for me with regards the defining of experience. I don't think that it is enough anymore to identify groups in need - we should be attempting to move past this model of identifying and categorising and should instead be looking towards a model that attempts not to fix identity but instead allow it space to change. A lot of the conversations were enthusiastic about notions of openness, uncertainty and incompleteness yet the structures we operate within often require a more fixed point of view. Institutions, organisations and individuals (myself of course included) must be looking towards other models of inclusion. It is unclear at this point what this looks like exactly but it is a question that is at the forefront of my mind moving forward.

Please provide the names and/or contact details of individuals/organisations or projects that might be useful in furthering the aims of the Visual Arts Manifesto and let us know why.

Ruangrupa, Jakarta, Indonesia - a multidisciplinary artist collective looking to disrupt notions of curatorship on an international platform

Elvira Dyangani Ose, The Showroom, London, UK - Elvira has extensive knowledge with regards to Black African experiences and is a particularly effusive individual concerning the importance of adapting to the needs of individual artists

Primary, Nottingham, UK - an arts organisation in Nottingham that is attempting to bring the notion of 'engagement' directly into their programming. Projects at Primary are particularly mindful of local communities and their desires for an art space whilst also producing and promoting the work of artists at all stages of their careers.