

PRESS RELEASE – SEPTEMBER 2021

Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator programme to tackle social mobility in the visual arts



Today, 28 September, Jerwood Arts announces its Curatorial Accelerator programme, a new pilot scheme to provide curatorial and leadership development for early-career visual arts curators from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The 12-month programme will support a cohort of curators through dedicated mentoring, training, and research; working with eight host organisations to introduce them to artistic networks across the UK. Jerwood Arts will appoint hosts over Autumn 2021 and will work with them to select the Accelerator Fellows through a focused open call in Spring 2022.

The programme has received £100,000 funding through Arts Council England's Transforming Leadership Programme, through which Jerwood Arts is also delivering the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries programme 2020-22, and a WJCB Alumni Fund, alongside £50,000 from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and in-kind support from Art Fund.

There is a dearth of specific research into socio-economic background of curators, but what there is suggests the level of diversity of UK-based curators is very low: only 21% of museums and gallery staff are from low socio-economic backgrounds and there is a lack of ethnic diversity, disabled and women in senior leadership roles across the visual arts sector*.

A recognised barrier for curators is access to postgraduate education in curating, a gateway to paid employment, professional networks and often a CV prerequisite. Yet while they are more widely available, they are also more expensive than ever, and present an often-insurmountable obstacle to those from low socio-economic backgrounds. For these reasons there is no educational eligibility requirement, and the programme will take a fully inclusive, intersectional approach throughout.

The programme also acknowledges the role of curators as 'gate keepers' to the diversity and breadth of art that is programmed and visible publicly across the UK. The time and money to travel to see new work and undertake research is rarely enabled in employed or freelance curatorial roles, creating an additional financial barrier to creative progression for curators from low socio-economic backgrounds. By supporting and developing a diverse curatorial infrastructure, the programme aims to impact future programming across the sector.

Lilli Geissendorfer, Director, Jerwood Arts, says:

"The Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator responds to an acute crisis in the visual arts around who gets to be a curator. It has grown out of our Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries programme which has been tackling social mobility in the arts since 2010. We are grateful to Arts Council England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Art Fund for their shared recognition of the barriers facing talented and ambitious early-career curators from low socio-economic backgrounds and look forward to confirming our host partners and opening for application in spring 2022."

Jane Tarr, Director, Skills and Workforce, Arts Council England:

"A dynamic cultural sector needs diversity of thought and people – so it is even more vital, now, that pathways are created that allow creative people from all backgrounds to reach their potential. I am pleased that, with support from the Arts Council, Jerwood Arts will be able to launch its Curatorial Accelerator programme. Building on the lived experience of nearly a generation of Weston Jerwood Bursary associates, this pilot scheme will begin to nurture a cohort of talented, early-career curators from low socio-economic backgrounds in their journey to make a positive impact and become our sector's future leaders."

Funded by the National Lottery, the Arts Council's Transforming Leadership was launched to address specific issues around diversity across leadership, opportunities for emerging and early career leaders, and the development of executive skills at senior levels.

Alison Holdom, Arts & Heritage Lead, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation said:

"Often the gatekeepers for commissions and exhibitions, curators play a key role in developing a more diverse and inclusive programme of arts in the UK. The Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator challenges accepted barriers in curatorial practice, which will help to build a cultural sector that reflects our society. Jerwood Arts has extensive expertise in developing individual artists and curators, and we're thrilled to be supporting them to do this work."

Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator will provide a 12-month cohort-based leadership and mentoring programme focused around eight 2-day residential training and networking intensives. Each one will be based in a different location across the UK and be built around a host organisation who will support wider engagement with artists, curators, arts leaders and arts organisations locally. An online co-created programme of workshops and talks will provide wrap-around support and connection for the peer group of Fellows. The training and development

will focus on expanding the curators' vision, artistic networks, leadership skills and appetite for artistic and wider civic leadership at national and local level.

The programme will target the small group of early-career curators from low socio-economic who have overcome barriers already to be working in the arts. This might be those with an independent or institutional employed curatorial practice as their main role, or those who curate as part of a second or freelance role they support by other employment. The Accelerator Fellows will be selected by a focused open call via Jerwood Arts and the host organisation networks using best practice and inclusive approaches building on the experience of Jerwood Arts in running the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary programme and funding for individuals.

By the end, the programme will equip the Accelerator Fellows with the networks, skills and knowledge to lead and impact future programming in the UK visual arts sector. They will be encouraged to challenge accepted norms and barriers in curatorial practice, self-identifying as emerging visual arts leaders who support the development and championing of artistic infrastructures outside of London.

Jerwood Arts welcomes discussions with any organisations with a shared interest in supporting increased socio-economic diversity and inclusion in curatorial practice, and particularly invites those who might be interested in being part of this pilot programme to get in touch via info@jerwoodarts.org

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For further information about Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator, please contact Harriet Clarke and Caroline Jones at Four Culture:

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Notes to Editors:

Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator is led by Jerwood Arts and funded by Arts Council England and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation with support from Art Fund. It is part of Arts Council England's Transforming Leadership Programme, through which Jerwood Arts is also delivering the [Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries Programme](#) and Alumni Fund 2020-22.

***Source:** Brook, O., O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2018) *Panic: Social class, taste and inequality in the creative industries*.

Defining 'low socio-economic background':

Jerwood Arts uses the term 'socio-economic background' instead of class because it helps us to be more specific and join up our work more easily with other social justice organisations outside of the arts. For example, in academic research about social mobility, 'socio-economic background' or 'socio-economic origins' is often the preferred term. The term refers to the particular set of social and economic circumstances that an individual has grown up in. Individuals from a low socio-economic background will most likely have been to state school, might have received free school meals as a child, and had a low household income when they were growing up. They might have grown up in the care system or been the first in their family to go to university. Other terms people from a lower socio-economic background might identify themselves with are working-class or benefits-class. Individuals from a lower socio-economic background are more likely to face intersecting barriers in society, experiencing racism, ableism and other forms of discrimination.

Jerwood Arts is the leading independent funder dedicated to supporting early-career UK-based artists, curators and producers to develop and thrive. We enable transformative opportunities for individuals across art forms, supporting imaginative awards, fellowships, programmes, commissions and collaborations. We present new work and bring people from across the arts together in the galleries at Jerwood Space, London, as well as across the UK and online. jerwoodarts.org

Summary of current programmes:

Multi Artform

- The [1:1 FUND](#), for two artists to work together following the isolating impact of the pandemic, is open for applications until 4 October
- The [Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries 2019-22](#), funding and working with 50 Host organisations and 51 artist-Fellows to tackle social mobility in the arts across the UK
- The [Development Programme Fund 2019-21](#), supporting 19 arts organisations to run specialist artist development programmes

Visual Arts

- [Survey II](#), a touring exhibition showcasing new work by 10 artists nominated by other artists
- [Jerwood/Photoworks Awards](#), two £15k commissions and touring exhibition for artists working with photography
- [Jerwood/FVU Awards](#), two £25k commissions and touring exhibition for artists working with moving image
- [Jerwood Art Fund Makers Open](#), five £8k commissions and touring exhibition for crafts and making practices
- [Jerwood Curatorial Accelerator](#), a new pilot scheme to provide curatorial and leadership development for visual arts curators from low socio-economic backgrounds
- [Jerwood Writer in Residence](#), two annual opportunities for arts writers

Touring partners include [Aberdeen Art Gallery](#), [Belfast Exposed](#), [g39 in Cardiff](#), [Leeds Art Gallery](#), [Newlyn Art Gallery](#) and [The Exchange in Penzance](#), and [Site Gallery](#) in Sheffield.

Literature and the Performing Arts

- [Live Work Fund](#), 33 of £20k awards for sustaining and reimagining live practices for a supported year
- [Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships](#), three £15k awards for poets to create a step-change in their practices during a supported year
- Major grants for national co-commissions including:
 - [Contains Strong Language](#) at the Coventry City of Culture
 - [Sonia Hughes' I Am From Reykjavik](#) at Spill Festival in Ipswich
 - Lorna Rees' Geophonic and Dave Young's Partnering with Earth at [InsideOut Festival](#) in Dorset
- [NDT Broadgate](#), providing free rehearsal space for independent artists in the heart of London
- [Another Route](#), a new 18-month artist fellowship programme to create new work for international presentation
- [PRS Foundation's The Composers Fund](#), grants for contemporary classical composers

Funding partners include [Arts Council England](#), [Arts Council of Wales](#), [Art Fund](#), [British Council](#), [Creative Scotland](#), [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#), [Garfield Weston Foundation](#), [The Linbury Trust](#), [PRS Foundation](#) and [Wolfson Foundation](#).

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in [Let's Create](#) that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government's unprecedented £1.96 billion Culture Recovery Funds. Find out more at artscouncil.org.uk/covid19

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK. We unlock change by contributing everything we can alongside people and organisations with brilliant ideas who share our goals.

The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. In 2020, we provided £53.5m in grant funding towards work in support of our aims and our emergency response to COVID. We also have a £45 million allocation to social investments for organisations with the aim of creating social impact. www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund has made £3.6 million in urgent funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 131,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2021 is Firstsite in Colchester. artfund.org