



## **In Session FKA GRADJOB**

### **Learning Policy 2021**

#### **Curatorial Approach**

In Session FKA GRADJOB was developed in response to the Neoliberal structures which we identified as perpetuating exploitation, oppression and inhibiting solidarity amongst early career artists in Scotland. We take a socially engaged approach to curatorial practice which employs pedagogical approaches, exploiting the intuitional practices of both the art gallery and the university. Our process is one of openness and transparency and we actively reject the idea of curator as expert.

We commission artists to develop workshops that encourage our cohort to question existing art world structures, challenge their own views, imagine alternatives and strategize about how to enact them. Expanding the cohort's critical awareness of key issues affecting their careers and lives as creative practitioners working in Scotland, through workshops and reading lists, is central to the programme.

In Session facilitates community building amongst Co-contributors, encouraging them to establish support systems within the group and see each other as friends, allies and collaborators. This is achieved through trust building, sharing ideas, active listening and group bonding exercises, as well as communal meals and socialising.

We are also committed to being responsive to the socio-political and civic landscape Co-contributors are working in, underscored by a belief that art can introduce new ideas and be used as a tool to deliver incremental sectoral and social change. By drawing attention to the roles that oppressive power structures play in upholding and reproducing current exploitative conditions we encourage Co-contributors to examine what it means to be implicated in them. We take an embedded approach, which advocates working within the systems we seek to disassemble to examine how we can exploit existing institutional structures whilst simultaneously undermining them.

Our curatorial practice is one of affective labour, of creating contexts in which new relationships to each other and to the world can unfold. We see context as a key factor in determining what a body is, what it can do and the capability of some contexts and relationships to other bodies to extend or erode the capacity for action. It is In Sessions mission to build communities that extend the limited capacity of the individual to act and to cultivate a belief in collaboration, collectivity and community.

Our 7 month residency is dedicated to building a bank of knowledge about the conditions that impact practice as an early-career practitioner. Workshops should be focused on helping our cohort develop tools that will help them to navigate and challenge practical, theoretical, organisational and economic concerns within the Scottish contemporary art scene. In Session is committed to challenging thinking around what it means to be 'successful' in the art world, therefore the creative practitioners we programme should be those who have chosen alternative routes and defined their careers on their own terms. We are also committed to supporting the Scottish contemporary art scene and so there is a requirement that all Artists programmed should be based in Scotland.

## **Learning Policy**

Selected applicants will enter the programme as 'Co-contributors'. The term 'Co-contributors' reflects the active role that our cohort will take in the creation of subversive tactics that can be used to dismantle existing structures from within.

We strive at all times to operate transparently and to encourage Co-contributors to see Organisers, Partners and contributing artists as collaborators. In Session provides a safe, friendly, empowering environment where Co-contributors are encouraged to find their voice and discover the confidence to embrace new opportunities, take control of their own learning and personal development and to change their lives for the better. We encourage openness to conflicting viewpoints and place emphasis peer learning and construction of knowledges through the process of engaging in collective imagining. We encourage the co-existence of criticality and creativity, embracing the idea of 'not knowing' and the possibility of 'failure'.

We value all voices and work proactively and creatively to bring together Contributing Artists and Co-contributors from diverse backgrounds together. We encourage the sharing of divergent experiences and opinions as we believe this deepens learning and enriches understanding of our issues affecting our sector.

Co-contributors are encouraged to 'think with' the world and to see concepts, structures and material conditions as actors which shape and are shaped by their engagement with one another. These actors affect outcomes, meanings and possibilities for change.

Sessions should not be focused on making, rather they should be designed to support Co-contributors in developing an approach to practice, helping them to contextualise their practice and to explore strategies for making practice more sustainable.

## **Working Methodology**

Our working methodology draws from the principles of Critical Participatory Action Research and centres collaboration between the Organisers, Partners, Contributing Artists and Co-contributors.

With this approach, we aim to create a more equal power dynamic between all those involved in the programme. Co-contributors participating in the programme have direct experience of the conditions that affect them and are therefore experts of their particular experience. Collaboration with Organisers, Partners, Contributing Artists and Co-contributors increases all parties' understanding of these conditions and the different ways they affect practitioners depending on identity, locale, circumstances and career stage.

As the methodological guidelines for Critical PAR emphasise that the concerns of the group should be reflected, we want to create an environment where knowledges are co-constructed throughout the programme by through group discussion and collaborative making. We take a view of knowledge as distributed and partial rather than fixed and universal - this is a staunchly feminist approach that de-centres patriarchal knowledge.

The key objectives of Critical PAR involve understanding the conditions in which a group of people practice, and working to implement changes that strive to achieve more rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive than were held prior. We promote criticality as an integral part of our programme, encouraging cohorts to question and challenge existing systems and to engage in meaningful conversations that we hope motivate them to become change-makers in the sector and in society.

As empowerment and transformation lie at the heart of In Session, it is important to us to implement a reflexive feedback loop consisting of action, reflection, theory and practice. This enables us to assess the success of our approach throughout the programme and encourage Partners, Contributors and Co-contributors to do the same.