

*Who decides what 'excellence' looks like?
If your work was a mirror, would it reflect society?
Does the unexpected bend your vision, or break it?
Would future generations approve?*

Speaker line up unveiled ahead of sector-wide conversation exploring how we develop creativity & culture in England

“LET’S DEBATE”

**March 13-14th 2023
KALA SANGAM in BRADFORD**

Mediale are delighted to announce the full line-up for *Let’s Debate*, a sector wide conversation exploring how we develop creativity and culture in England today. Taking place on 13 - 14th March at Kala Sangam in Bradford, *Let’s Debate* will celebrate some of the most innovative, impactful, and exciting work taking place across the creative and cultural industries.

Commissioned by Arts Council England, and produced by international arts commissioner Mediale, *Let’s Debate* will be hosted by celebrated poet, drama writer, curator and historian **Edson Burton**.

Edson says; “Policy lives and dies on the coal face of experience. The most considered strategies are shaped reshaped by the complex landscape in which they take root. Here is an opportunity a rare opportunity to understand and refine those principles, we hold dear, by understanding the multiple, and shifting cultural landscapes. It is only through hearing the unfiltered voices of those rooted in such terrains that we can turn abstract principles into pragmatic outcomes.”

The two days will seek to offer diverse perspectives and lived experiences, drawing on insights from inspirational speakers from the full depth and breadth of England’s cultural sector and beyond. Reflections and recordings from the two days will be shared online after the event, and longer term on the Arts Council England Resource Hub, a newly created content platform for the sector.

The Resource Hub hosts 'essential reads', which explain the foundations of each Investment Principle providing advice and useful links to help those in governance and leadership positions think about how they might apply them in their roles.

The *Let’s Debate* speakers, mapped against each of the Arts Council’s four investment principles are:

1. Ambition & Quality

Jonathan Harper, Chief Executive, Paraorchestra

“It is long overdue, but we won’t begin to see fundamental change in the sector until we shift our thinking away from outdated stereotypes about who gets to be an artist, where the best artistic work is presented, and who gets to engage and critique it. Let’s Create provides a framework to make progress

in these areas and allows me the opportunity to tilt the power in the direction of a new generation of artists and audiences”.

Shanaz Gulzar, Creative Director, Bradford City of Culture 2025

“I challenge stereotypes every step of the way. In Bradford, our UK City of Culture 2025 win was built on thousands of conversations with our many, diverse communities and our extraordinary young population. They all wanted two things – opportunity and inclusivity. We need to make the creative sector accessible for people of all backgrounds and abilities – and only then will we be able to produce bold, new work of the highest quality that truly reflects the multi-faceted, multi-cultural society we live in.”

2. Environmental Responsibility

Caitlin Southwick, Founder & Executive Director, Ki Culture

“As ever-increasing social and environmental crises become the new normal, the cultural sector must re-examine its role. We are no longer houses of collections or didactic monologues - but must change our position within our communities and for our audiences to become relevant to contemporary issues. Our role must focus on being leaders for sustainability - from practising to advocating. The only way to prevent museums from becoming a thing of the past is to start connecting them to the future.”

Sara Kassam, Sustainability Advisor, UK Sport

“Environmental tokenism is not sufficient, a project here, an exhibition there...we all need to be doing more, at an increased pace, in greater depth and in a sustained manner. Culture helps to reflect and represent our societies and has the power to connect us to the natural world which we are reliant on to survive and thrive. How can we use this power to bring about the systemic change that is needed?”

3. Inclusivity & Relevance

Rikki Beadle-Blair MBE, award-winning writer, director, composer, choreographer, designer, producer and performer working across film, theatre, television and radio.

“When many people say ‘diversity’ they mean ‘find black people’. If you are a person who is in a perceived minority – I’m in several – then we must get in majority positions in our own businesses and our own creative endeavours, and then demonstrate the siblinghood that we wish other people, who have had the power for so long, were able to do.”

Tarik Elmoutawakil, Creative Director, Marlborough Productions

“My work has for the last 10 years largely been focussed on making creatively engaging spaces that centre marginalised people. As a disabled queer artist with mixed/Black heritage, I am personally and professionally invested in challenging and subverting the cultural and political status quo. Learning how to advocate for and acquire the resources for the communities I represent has shown me that being minoritised does not have to mean being disempowered.”

Laura Jones, Co-Artistic Director, Stopgap Dance

“Using dance as a medium Stopgap aims to create an inclusive world where diversity is not just accepted but pursued, a world where no one is limited by prejudice against D/deaf, disabled, or neurodivergent people. Our process involved listening to the diversity of voices and needs to discover a new and equitable way of working and living. We know that inclusion elevates everyone, and we want to show how this can be realised through creativity and collaboration.”

4. Dynamism

Keisha Thompson, the UK's first poet to run a multi-arts venue, Contact in Manchester

"I met so many different people at Contact and had my perspective changed and just really got that sense of what youth leadership can be. I want to make sure that this ethos, culture and environment is protected because it was so beneficial for me and so many people that I know. It is how I became such a natural advocate for what Contact is about."

Amahra Spence Artist, Spatial Practitioner and Founding Director of MAIA, a Black-led arts and social justice organisation.

"In the face of compounding crises, our work interrogates how we make change pragmatic and poetic, by situating culture as integral to the imagining and realising of new systems. Through the development of spaces and infrastructure that support creative capacities, we connect communities and artists to rehearse visions for the future."

www.artscouncil.org.uk/investment-principles-resource-hub

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Notes to editors

What is the Investment Principles Resource Hub?

The Investment Principles Resource Hub is a space for resources produced by artists, thinkers, entrepreneurs, small businesses and more, offering support for the development of well-run, future facing organisations and individual creative practice. Reflections and recordings from Let's Debate will be hosted on the hub from April 2023 for everyone to enjoy.

You can explore the hub now: www.artscouncil.org.uk/investment-principles-resource-hub

About Mediale

About Arts Council England

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. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year 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 responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.