

PRESS RELEASE
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LONDON

**Report highlights urgency to support anti-racist practice
in London's visual arts sector**

A report published today, sets out a new approach to tackling racism and inequity in the visual arts sector, and makes recommendations for a long-term, anti-racist development scheme to be adopted by arts institutions.

Written by artist Dr Jack Ky Tan, the report is the culmination of a knowledge exchange project initiated by CVAN London (Contemporary Visual Arts Network) in collaboration with iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), exploring how arts organisations may establish and support anti-racist and equitable working practices. The project was started following increasing reports of racist incidents experienced by artists and cultural workers in the sector, and the desire expressed by CVAN's members to create a meaningful, proactive response to bring about change.

The research was carried out in two parts: the convening of two knowledge exchange roundtables with a cross-section of arts organisations in the CVAN London network led by Jack Ky Tan, and meetings with a group of artists hosted by artist Larry Achiampong.

The artist's meetings were convened as a safe space to enable open conversations about artists' experiences and to offer mutual support. They served to bear witness and to evidence the racism suffered by people working in the visual arts sector.

The two roundtable knowledge exchange workshops were held for the institutional members of CVAN London to explore their needs and experiences around tackling and experiencing racism and inequality. Led by artist Jack Ky Tan, the workshops took the question, "What does an anti-racist institution look like?" as a starting point to open discussion.

Dr Tan is an artist whose practice investigates organisational and legal structures, governance and systems. His creative response to the knowledge-exchange sessions, being launched today, is presented as "AREVA REPORT - A Knowledge Exchange Report on Anti-Racism and Equity in the Visual Arts." Using an art practice as research approach, the report includes poetry as a method of recording conversations; and takes the radical performance artist Yoko Ono as inspiration for a range of suggested interventions designed to test and challenge accepted structures and power dynamics in the workplace. The report concludes with a recommendation on the further work and investment needed to create an anti-racist and equitable arts ecology of the future.

Sepake Angiama, Artistic Director at iniva said, "We felt that this work was necessary following conversations with artists and the varying experiences they were having with cultural institutions that needed mediation. When you are an artist or cultural worker from a racialised community, you are met with challenges working within the arts. How do you decentre 'whiteness' within culture? This report highlights that cultural institutions need to 'do the work' of transforming their institutions to create greater awareness and understanding of how institutional racism operates, and to consider how to tackle it. It is not simply enough to expect people of colour to be the only ones to tackle these issues. For systemic change, we need to work together and recognise firstly that a change is needed. We can no longer pretend that racism does not exist - but we need to be active in combatting prejudices and attitudes that shape and inform the way we work."

This research is part of a wider programme being developed by CVAN, Fair + Equitable (F+E), a five-year programme and commitment to instituting equity within the visual arts sector in England. The focus is on equipping the sector to actively facilitate change, to ensure that work to foster equity is not simply a time-limited investment priority for funders and organisations but is thoroughly embedded into organisational practices across the sector. Above all else, this shift towards equity in the visual arts sector asks for organisations and stakeholders to take consistent and committed action, starting today.

Jo Townshend, CVAN London Director said, “We are proud to be working with iniva and Jack Ky Tan on the anti-racist and equitable visual arts project to support institutional and network development of anti-racist and equitable practice. We welcome Jack’s report and recommendations and commit to taking action. Working in collaboration with creative communities across London’s diverse and dynamic visual arts ecology, we will be holding further knowledge exchanges to co-create our future direction and contribute to the national CVAN Fair & Equitable Programme.”

“AREVA REPORT - A Knowledge Exchange Report on Anti-Racism and Equity in the Visual Arts” is available to read here: <http://bit.ly/3VYHp7w>

A raw text version of the report for text-to-speech users can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3QuslYz>

The AREVA project was funded by Arts Council England.



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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT INIVA

iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) is a visual arts organisation whose artistic programme reflects the social and political impact of globalization, encouraging discourse and debate on issues surrounding the politics of race, gender and class.

Founded in 1994, under the leadership of renowned academic Professor Stuart Hall, iniva is a non-profit organisation based in London. It has established itself as a pioneering arts organisation in the UK and beyond.

With the Stuart Hall Library acting as a critical and creative hub for its work, iniva collaborates with artists, curators, researchers and cultural producers to challenge conventional notions of diversity and difference. The library holds a collection of over 10,000 publications, including artist books, monographs, exhibition catalogues, journals and zines, as well as an archive of iniva’s history promoting the work of Black and Asian artists such as those from the UK Black Arts Movement.

iniva’s programme supports artists and cultural producers at different stages in their careers, offering residencies, commissioning new work and promoting practice which enables artistic ambition and development. By cultivating innovative thinking, iniva is committed to disseminating research across a wide cultural spectrum and geographical network. Their ambition is to build a greater body of knowledge around each of the artists with whom they work to ensure the legacy of their practices for future generations of researchers and audiences.

iniva is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Twitter: @Iniva_arts

Instagram: @iniva_arts

Web: www.iniva.org

FURTHER INFORMATION about iniva:

Contact: Sarah Mangan, Deputy Director, iniva.
smangan@iniva.org

ABOUT CVAN

CVAN London is a research-led, sector support and advocacy network that represents arts professionals, art galleries, arts organisations, studios and art schools across London boroughs. As one of the nine national regions, London is the newest, born-digital network.

CVAN is where arts workers come together to drive change in our sector. We are a visual arts network with nine interconnected regions. CVAN England, the national hub, leads the collective agenda. We use our deeply rooted regionality to advocate and campaign nationally to build recognition for the value of visual arts.

We strive to close the gap between the realities that our sector faces and the rationale of decision-makers, so that no changes are made in isolation. We bring together visual artists and arts workers to ensure a combined, evidenced voice is heard, valued and recognised in order that our sector can thrive.

Twitter: @cvanetwork

Instagram: @CVANetwork

Web: www.cvan.art

FURTHER INFORMATION about CVAN:

Contact: Paula Orrell, Director, CVAN National
paula@cvan.art