



VALUES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
IN PRACTICE

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REGISTERED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS

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Introduction

This document is a statement in practice based on the Values and Ethical Principles that underpin my work. It has been developed through asking how my individual values and ethics sit within practice, within the collective spaces that I work in, with participating individuals, groups and with collaborating practitioners, organisations, funders and other partners.

It is shared with the idea that there is no one way; that approaches to a values-based way of working must be shaped and re-shaped with those involved at any given time through the process of working together.

It is meant to be viewed, used and responded to, through a lens of curiosity; asking questions with others to re-image and re-negotiate our working relationships and approaches so they are responsive to the values of a socially-engaged practice.

This is not a fixed statement of practice but an evolving and fluid document, a series of aspirational statements and approaches that I am developing and that I strive for. I will continue to edit this document and welcome comment and feedback as contributions to this process, info@katharinewheeler.com.

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Creative Practice

I follow the idea that *art* should be for everyone and has a foundational role in our society to celebrate and connect, collectivise and question, to tell stories and try on new ideas, to imagine new and different futures and ways of living. This is an *art* that lives mostly outside of galleries, it is found in the ways we gather, the places we play, the ways we find to celebrate and express ourselves.

As an artist I work in these other spaces. I bring a *creative practice* to all that I do; to making, thinking and in how I work with others. This is a practice of curiosity, of creative imagination, of collaboration and experimentation. The *art* is a less invisible one, it is in methods and spaces I make for exploration, it is in the cultural activities I use to bring people together in conversation, it is in the processes used to talk about social issues and test ideas and explore the identities of the places we live. It is a *creative practice* grown from community arts, activism, youth work, community learning and development, years of active making and celebrating and is rooted in the ethos of localism, shared resources, community empowerment and collective care.

“Creativity is not limited to people practicing one of the traditional forms of art, and even in the case of artists, creativity is not confined to the exercise of their art...Creation—whether it be a painting, sculpture, symphony or novel—involves not merely talent, intuition, powers of imagination and application, but also the ability to shape material that could be expanded to other socially relevant spheres.” (Beuys, J, 1979:278, *Joseph Beuys Exhibition Catalogue*)



Manifesto of Values

Curiosity

- Embrace the unknown and find joy in the change of direction
- Look for the important questions and be wary of easy, and fixed answers
- Look for what I do not know, and know that will change what I think I know already
- Do not take myself too seriously, be playful, that is where the magic lies
- Embrace fellow travellers, make space and give time to the unplanned

Courage

- Believe in bold ideas
- Speak up against inequity, oppression, and injustice
- Be accountable to the impact of my actions, over long and short periods of time
- Embrace the process, even when it leads in challenging and difficult directions

Open

- Be honest and share my truth so that I may find the areas where it overlaps and pushes against others
- Allow space, and give time, to vulnerability, it is the currency that brings depth to connection
- Listen, listen, and keep listening, and know there will always be perspectives I do not understand
- Reflect deeply and share process, leaning into the discomfort as well as celebrating success
- Be aware, and open about, the experience/skills I do not have as well as the ones I bring

Collaborative

- Put ideas out into the world as they are forming and let them come back changed
- Give time to joint exploration and playful enquiry without a preconceived goal or destination
- Meet people where they are, and know that is fluid and changeable
- Always be mindful of equitable exchange and know what is equitable for one is not the same for another and can change at any given time
- Know my privilege, and consider that I may never fully know all of it

Hopeful

- Believe in unimaginable futures and make spaces that bring people together to play in that imagining
- Work for a bigger goal than myself, but know that small actions can lead to bigger change
- Nurture the power of hope for growing better and more sustainable communities

Generosity

- Be gentle in my judgements and generous within my boundaries
- Consider that there are different manifestations of participation, and that there is value in the less obvious
- Look for accessible and inclusive ways to share work and help to grow our collective knowledge commons
- Believe in the currency of giving and exchange as part of a circular economy



Working principles

Co-creation and collaboration

My work is rooted in concepts of co-creation and collaboration. In this I understand collaborative practice to be a personal as well as a collective and professional journey. To meaningfully collaborate with others requires making space and time for the engagement to lead the direction of the work.

- I create spaces for dialogue with others to identify shared values and work together towards shared goals.
- I foster processes of collaborative learning that value the experience we all bring and allow for fluid leadership that recognises individual and collective responsibilities.
- I make space, through engagement and participative processes, to review and reconsider the direction of work through its ongoing development, delivery and evaluation.
- I am committed to giving time to collective decision-making processes that build trust by working through challenges together.
- I use methods of working that are open and transparent and regularly explore and share processes, learning and failures with others.
- I ensure that contribution is negotiated and reviewed between those involved, on the basis of our collective goal, individual creative journeys and personal circumstances.

People and place

At the heart of my practice is a belief in the importance of our active human connection to the places we live. I believe 'local' is the key to understanding, interpreting and creatively re-positioning the world as a fairer and kinder place¹.

- I commit my long-term practice to connecting with and making contributions to the places and communities that are local to me.
- I will continue to shape my work by its relevance within the places and communities I know and live and have grown long-term and active relationships with.
- I actively seek to engage the skills, expertise and knowledge already present and around me as part of the work I do with and in a place.
- I use creative practice to encourage connection and agency in our local environment and communities and bring these concepts into the development of work with others.
- Even in the places I think I know, I will "walk each step as a greeting" in both curiosity and humility (KIMMER, R, 2013)

"By honouring the knowledge in the land, and caring for its keepers, we start to become indigenous to place." (KIMMER, R, 2013, *Braiding Sweetgrass*)

¹ The Stove Network, accessed 8.5.2022, *Creative Practice*, <https://thestove.org/creative-practice/>



Community

'Community offers the promise of belonging and calls for us to acknowledge our interdependence' (Block, P, 2018:4, *Community*)

I believe that community, our sense connection, belonging, relatedness, is central to our capacity to solve problems, organise and address the suffering and inequalities around us. It is connectedness and our sense of community that is needed to grow the common good within the places we live, shift ownership and power, look for shared and collective custodianship of local resources and ensure those less heard are listened to (Block, P, 2018, *Community*).

- I use, and advocate for, creative practice as a means to grow our connection to each other, our sense of place and identity, and explore the needs of our place and how we can address those together.
- I centre community voices within the development and delivery of my work, finding ways to share, reflect, and take ownership of the activity.
- I aim to bring together people who are not used to being together into conversations they are not used to having.
- I embed conversations about the long-term legacy of work through development, delivery and reflection and look for what can be created that will have impact beyond the initial duration of a project.
- I look to grow shared local resources within projects and activity, no matter how small an initial step.

"In times of crisis, community art, as an expression of our humanity, becomes the antidote against great powers that (seem to) no longer have themselves under control. Humanity expresses itself in small acts of kindness and creative expression, with healing rituals and imagination that can keep us sane and sometimes even saves our lives. In that sense, the work that you all do out there cannot be considered small. It is huge. It can save our spirit, spark our imagination and activate our empathy." (International Festival of Community Art, April 2022 newsletter)

Care and wellbeing

I believe in putting care at the heart of our lives and politics, working towards more collective accountability for the needs within our communities and re-imagining localised environments within which we can all flourish (CHATZIDAKIS, A, et al, 2020, *The Care Manifesto*).

- I look to work in ways that move beyond purely transactional processes and shift our thinking in terms of how we relate to each other's individual circumstances and needs.
- I aim to work in ways that foster collective accountability and grow networks of belonging that support our individual abilities and nurture our interdependencies.
- I aim to make spaces for self-nurturing and use methods of working that support others.
- I bring my whole self to my work, making space and time for vulnerability.
- I use creative practice to vision and re-imagine alternate approaches and working systems within our communities.



Participation and culture

I believe in the concept of participation as the most basic individual choice and power we have in the world around us. I do not see 'arts audience' as a consumer of art but as active participants, in the process, creation and meaning of all creative actions².

- I look to develop, and advocate, for grassroots approaches to growing culture that question and broaden what we define as culture to include the everyday activities that shape and define who we are.
- I aim to increase participation through culture and creative activity to aid local development and decision-making in a place and help embed that as a leading voice in policy making spaces.
- I use process-led methods and participatory development of programmes to diversify and devolve power within cultural provision and development.
- I make space for different acts of participation, the quiet as well as the loud, the observational as well as the active.

*"By culture, I mean the fabric of signs and symbols, language and image, customs and ceremonies, habitations, institutions, and much more that characterise and enable a specific human community to form and sustain itself." (Goldbard, A 2013, *The Culture of Possibility*)*

Art, activism and social change

*"As the home of imagination and a common vehicle for societal critique, the arts have the potential to supply a place of attentive political experimentation." (Lennon, M, 2020:7, *The art of inclusion: phenomenology, placemaking and the role of the arts*)*

There is power in arts and cultural activity to collectivise around issues and act as a facilitator, instigator, of community participation and civic action. In this I see a role for artists in spaces of civic decision-making, policy work and structural development as creative explorers that can open up new and imaginative possibilities.

- I aim to grow projects and activities that help imagine different ways of working and living and connect grassroots action to concepts for change.
- I work to embed creative engagement into our processes of local and civic decision-making as a foundation of discussion and agenda setting, not simply as a process of consultation.
- I look for methods of working that shifts power, resource and ownership towards the people the work is intended to benefit.
- I use arts practice to engage people in acts of collective imagining and participation in locally relevant issues.
- I commit to doing work that is independent of corporate agendas and top-down processes of development.
- I hold freedom respectful expression as paramount within projects and commit to making space for the lived experience of others.
- I use art/creative practice as a connector to play in, and bridge, the spaces between sectors, placemaking and community, politics and science, health and economic development, people, place and community.

² The Stove Network, accessed 8.5.2022, *Creative Practice*, <https://thestove.org/creative-practice/>



“As risk-takers with the creative audacity to think beyond today’s boxes, artists play a powerful role in inciting conversations, inventing new ways of thinking, and redefining the limits of what’s possible.” (Cézanne, C, 2018, ArtChangeUS, Cultural Community Benefit Principles Toolkit)

Local economies and more sustainable practices

I believe that a core principle of a place-based practice is to grow projects and activity that build long-term impacts for the places, communities and people involved. This means embracing concepts of community wealth building, wellbeing economics and circular economies and developing more localised, sustainable and greener ways of working.

- I will continue to research and develop my understanding of the working principles within these concepts for myself and through the work that I do with others.
- I foster partnerships with other individuals and organisations to work towards more sustainable and localised practices in our communities.
- I consider the long-term legacy of the work I develop with people, what it builds, amplifies, aligns with in a place that can continue to evolve beyond the life of the project.
- I procure locally, where ever possible, the skills and expertise required within a project.
- Where work connects with other national and international creative practitioners, I aim to do this in such a way that knowledge, skills and networks are increased in our sector locally and not just for myself.
- I commit to minimising carbon impact across the work that I do. This includes thinking about material use, looking to re-use, recycle, upcycle, buying ethically and locally as much as possible and considering how the work I do can support local supply chains and networks.

“When it all boils down to it, a wellbeing economy is designed with a different purpose: it starts with the idea that the economy should serve people and communities, first and foremost.” (HOUGH-STEWART, L, TREBECK, K, SOMMER, C and WALLIS, S, 2019:8, WEALL Ideas: Little Summaries of Big Issues, Wellbeing Economy Alliance)

Exchange, payment and freelance working

I believe in paying fair rates as well as embracing different forms of currency, exchange, that consider wider holistic ways of sharing skills and working together but which are also considerate of the differences in precarity that exist across our work and individual circumstance.

- I consider the “ask” of a project/activity, for all involved including participants and volunteers, and co-develop approaches that are clear, supportive and negotiable.
- I commit to discussing pay structures openly, talking about the relationship between freelance and PAYE working, existing or non-existing independent and organisational support structures, to ensure equitable exchange that is responsive to individual and collective need.
- I will budget for and pay union advised rates for short and long-term work. Where a project is multi-disciplinary, and works across sectors, I will look to co-develop pay policies that provide equitably remuneration of those involved.
- Not all work I do has a budget. Where there is no money available, I will be share this openly, be clear and transparent about what I am asking of others, look for other forms of exchange, and ensure we continue to review expectations together.
- I am committed to evolving our understanding of freelance creative work, challenging organisational assumptions and systems that bias PAYE contracts or do not consider the impacts of short-term working/volunteering.



Authorship and the commons

I believe in growing our wider creative commons as a resource of learning, knowledge and ideas that can be developed by others as well as supporting sustainability of individual practices, paying for use of, crediting and acknowledging the authorship and intellectual property of others.

- When work is created solely by myself I will assume copyright and will require permission sought before any further use or reproduction.
- In collaborative work, authorship and intellectual property rights will be discussed and decided by those involved, crediting all who wish to be acknowledged and valuing the variety of contribution across the project/activity.
- Where ever possible I will look for what can be of wider public benefit within projects/activity I am party to and put out, where appropriate work for further sharing and development through [Creative Commons Licence](#).
- I will be clear and open about the uses I foresee of work with those involved and keep open dialogue about consent and permissions throughout the process of development and delivery.
- I will build relationships with those involved, allowing consent and permissions to evolve with the work.

Communication and accountability

From experience I have learned that the strongest foundation of successful, meaningful work is one of clear and regular communication and working together towards a shared accountability across those involved.

- I will explore with those involved, through development and delivery, the starting points and ambitions for work and embed regular and active lines of communication through activity.
- As part of initiating work I will explore the roles and responsibilities within projects/activities with practitioners, partners and groups involved, to collectively evolve structures of working and make spaces for review and check-in through delivery.
- For all work I undertake, or engage other professionals in, I will ensure we have clear agreements in writing that lay out our shared expectations, principles of working, roles and responsibilities, key dates and milestones, agreed fees, cancellation policy, authorship and insurances required.
- If disagreements arise, I will first look to resolve through communication and revision of agreed expectations, documentation for work. If this fails I will suggest mediation support by an agreed third party and seek advice from supporting bodies such as Artists Union.
- I will ensure professional practice across the work that I do, maintaining insurance, public liability and professional indemnity and in seeking PVG's where applicable.
- I will not store personal information or documentation gathered through work unless agreed with those involved.

“Shared decision-making involves shifting the balance of power from arts practitioners and organisations to include a spectrum of local voices: for example community members, local businesses and community organisations. It creates a space where different perspectives are valued.” (White, L, 2019, Shared Decision-making)



Inclusion and access

My vision is for a diverse cultural sector that is inclusive and reflective of all people, cultures and abilities through production, distribution, access and participation. In this I recognise that the current systems of education, work and support makes a sustainable career in culture extremely difficult, but disproportionately so for those people from working-class backgrounds, people of colour, ethnic minorities, women and those with disabilities (Brook, O, O'Brian, D and Taylor, M, 2020).

- Within the areas of influence that I have I will continue to question how we represent arts and culture, looking for who's cultural experience is not represented or as highly valued.
- I will take time to critique and question our working approaches and policies to help move towards a more diverse, inclusive and equitable sector for workers and participants.
- I am committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination through the activities and the spaces I make, and through the processes and approaches I take to working with others.
- I will listen and educate myself on my own privilege and make space and time to explore that with others.
- I will make spaces within the work that I do for people with diverse perspectives to represent themselves.
- I will keep open avenues for dialogue on accessibility and the needs of individuals to collaborate, participate and access work, projects and activities.

"There is now a very pressing question as to how cultural occupations change in response to the inequalities that research, in particular academic research, on gender, class, and race has revealed." (Brook, O, O'Brian, D and Taylor, M, 2020:253, *Culture is bad for you*)

The story of what we do

There is so much more we can tell about the socially-engaged and community embedded work of creative practitioners working in our places, communities and structures of support and learning. Reflective and evaluative processes can be woven through the concept, development, delivery and reflection of activities and should be an open and transparent process we can all learn from.

- I am committed to building the capacity within the arts and cultural sector to better understand the impact of community embedded and place-based collaborative working by creative practitioners.
- I will embed learning and development for myself and for others through the work that I do by building spaces for collective reflection, critique interrogation of outcomes and working processes to inform future developments.
- I will build in robust documentation processes by multiple observers, to witness and reflect back the work through different perspectives and outlooks.
- I will make space for failure, fostering an ethos of experimentation within projects that allows for learning and development through pushing boundaries and taking risks.
- I adopt the idea of fellow travellers, openly sharing ideas, concepts and learning with others that wish to do the same and making space for the time that takes.

"In times of crisis, community art, as an expression of our humanity, becomes the antidote against great powers that (seem to) no longer have themselves under control. Humanity expresses itself in small acts of kindness and creative expression, with healing rituals and imagination that can keep us sane and sometimes even saves our lives. In that sense, the work that you all do out there cannot be considered small. It is huge. It can save our spirit, spark our imagination and activate our empathy." (International Festival of Community Art, April 2022 newsletter)



Some tools and related links

- Artists Union: <https://www.artistsunion.scot/>
- Artworks Alliance Knowledge Bank: <https://www.artworksalliance.org.uk/knowledge-bank/>
- Centre for Cultural Value, Resources: <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/cultural-value-resources/>
- Creative Carbon Scotland: <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/>
- Creative Commons: <https://creativecommons.org/>
- Culture Collective, Library: <https://www.culturecollective.scot/library/>
- Disability Arts Online: <https://disabilityarts.online/>
- Evaluation Support Scotland, Resources: <https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/>
- FailSpace: <https://failspaceproject.co.uk/>
- Chrysalis Arts Development, Greening Arts Practice Guide: <https://www.chrysalisarts.com/resources/greening-arts-practice-guide>
- Imagination Sundial: <https://www.robhopkins.net/2020/06/30/introducing-the-imagination-sundial/>
- Is this the best it can be? https://www.creativescotland.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/35597/ArtWorks-Toolkit-Is-this-the-best-it-can-be1.pdf
- Open Edge: <https://www.openedge.org.uk/>
- REconomy Project: <http://reconomy.org/>
- The Illustrated Freelancers Guide: https://www.creativescotland.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/88816/2022-Illustrated-Freelancer-Guide.pdf
- Commons Network: <https://www.commonsnetwork.org/>
- Social Art Library: <https://www.socialartlibrary.org/>
- Shared Decision-making Toolkit: <https://www.artworksalliance.org.uk/awa-resource/shared-decision-making/>
- Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland: <https://weall.org/scotland>

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