

Race Equality Policy

The VAGA Executive has agreed to work towards a single equalities policy within which this race equality policy will be integrated.

VAGA is a small not for profit organisation that employs one full-time director, three part-time staff and a variable number of associates and freelance workers. However it serves a large community of members who in turn engage with increasingly large and diverse publics. VAGA also works with and influences policy-makers and the media across the UK and beyond. It therefore has substantial reach and responsibility.

The visual arts reflect, challenge and symbolise society, and helping to shape our individual and collective identities. The visual arts provide a space where ideas and values can be freely explored, developed and questioned.

It is important that VAGA's vision, policies and actions aim to go beyond simply meeting legislative requirement, to championing diversity and being an ambassador for sustainable change.

VAGA acknowledges that there may be instances where the championing of equality and diversity might lead to potential incompatibility on moral and religious issues and will therefore develop policies that promote understanding, respect and a will towards resolution where such conflict might arise.

VAGA believes in a right to art - the opportunity to enjoy, engage with and participate in art and in particular in the art of today - and the creative, collective and moral values expressed by such a right. In promoting a right to art VAGA is actively committed to celebrating diverse cultures, diverse histories and artforms, supporting innovation (which may often come from outside the mainstream), and promoting inter-cultural and intra-cultural understanding, exchange and development.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that race equality and diversity principles and practices are embedded within all VAGA's activities. Each member of staff, – employed or freelance – , Executive Member and VAGA Member has a duty to support and promote the aims of this policy.

VAGA's Equal Opportunities Policy provides an overarching framework.

This policy will be implemented through actions and policies that cover

- VAGA's internal operations: employment, training, governance, membership development
- VAGA's programme of networking, information and knowledge delivery and CPD for its membership and partners
- VAGA 's programme of advocacy and research
- VAGA's contribution to national policy development on behalf of the sector
- VAGA 's external communications and ambassadorial role

The responsibility for monitoring and delivery will lie with the Executive to which the Director is responsible. An Executive Member will be identified as leading on Race Equality and Diversity.

Draft policy statement:

- *VAGA is committed to creating a culture within the visual arts in which diversity and equality of opportunity are actively embedded and promoted and in which unlawful discrimination is not tolerated.¹*
- *VAGA will make race equality a core issue across all programmes and activities and champion equality and diversity in all that we do,.*
- *VAGA will actively promote equality of opportunity for Black and Minority Ethnic communities and individuals, artists, and arts organisations through its programme of advocacy, research and public communications and support its members in fulfilling their race equality to their staff and publics and in furthering diversity,*
- *VAGA will actively recognise past issues of discrimination and use these as catalysts for reflection and progression.*

VAGA will, in particular, work with others to diversify both the audiences for and the workforce engaged with the visual arts and so as to more properly reflect the makeup of contemporary society and remove barriers, be they real or perceived.

This draft policy will be formally adopted following consultation with Members.

Equalities Working Party

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1

VAGA acknowledges that racism exists in society and recognises that members (and staff) and the publics members work with may experience unfair treatment or discrimination because of their race, colour, ethnicity, religion or language. To quote The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, both institutional and individual racism 'can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages ethnic minority people'.¹