

Time for a reset

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The CULTURE RESET programme is up and running. **Richard Watts** shares the vision – and the inspiration.

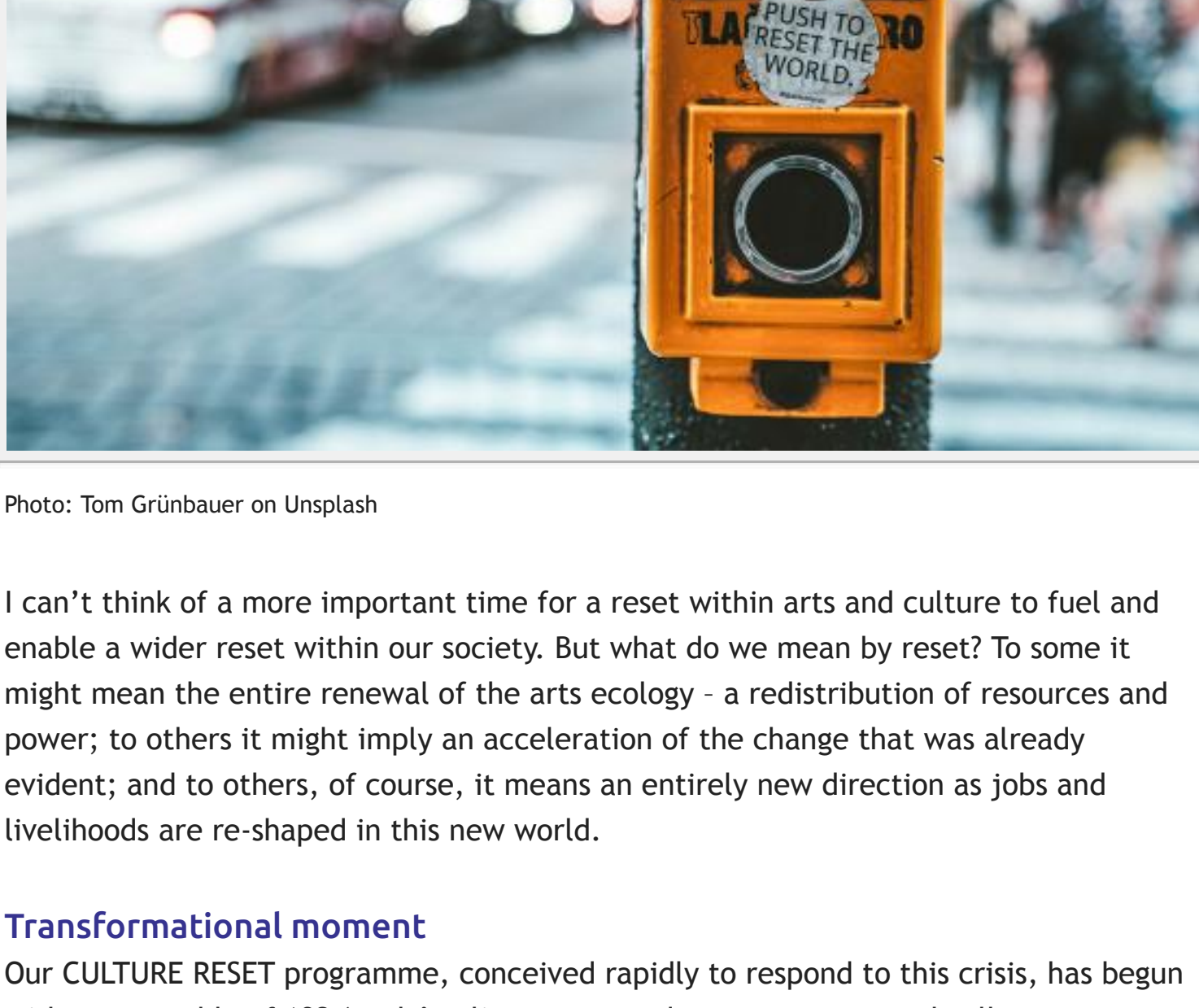


Photo: Tom Grünbauer on Unsplash

I can't think of a more important time for a reset within arts and culture to fuel and enable a wider reset within our society. But what do we mean by reset? To some it might mean the entire renewal of the arts ecology - a redistribution of resources and power; to others it might imply an acceleration of the change that was already evident; and to others, of course, it means an entirely new direction as jobs and livelihoods are re-shaped in this new world.

They were selected from the 960 people who applied to the programme in just 10 days at the beginning of July. Having read every application, as one of a broad team of dedicated assessors, I was bowled over by the energy for change (despite the pressures of the current moment), the urgency that is felt and the range of ways that people across the UK are determined not to miss this transformational moment.

Developing this programme over the last eight weeks with Claire Doherty, David Micklem and the brilliant group of artists, facilitators and collaborators who are making it possible, has of course involved a dynamic conversation about why we need to reset arts and culture and how we could create a programme that left enough room for everyone to bring their own perspectives and distinct approaches to this programme.

For me personally, the need for a culture reset is a political issue of social justice and representation. As a white gay man from a working class rural agricultural background, a young carer and now in a mixed heritage marriage with my husband, I feel that the quality of my life experience today is largely built on the work of playwrights, actors, novelists, screenwriters and the wider cultural sector. They enabled the social attitudinal changes in the UK that mean I love my life. People like me are much more visible, enabled, supported and included today. I'm happy that is the case at last, but it also gives me a deep commitment to social justice and an unshakeable belief in the relevance of culture for each of us, every day.

Much of the ease, visibility and representation I experience isn't shared by my husband who is a black man who grew up in the Caribbean. I notice that in other countries and communities (including the one he grew up in) the positive and embracing stories about sexuality are not told as freely and the social context for LGBTQIA+ people in those places and communities remains more constrained and contested than it is for me. I also notice that my experience as a white man in the UK is easier and more accepting than my husband's, and indeed, I navigate any barriers I do experience with my white privilege.

So, culture is of and shapes society, and the exclusion of specific voices, experiences, identities and perspectives damages that society and the excluded people in it. Exclusion and inequity in that sense isn't omission - it's an aggressive act of harm. Jasmine Wahi, Social Justice curator at the Bronx Museum and a guest speaker at our first Culture Reset assembly, suggested that we need to see, "all of us in all of our elements" to bring about social justice. And further, "We live in countries that are predicated on the idea of oppressing others... It is at their core and foundation.... My view is that you do anything and everything you can to push back against it."

Wahi's provocation reminded me of Adrienne Maree Brown in her book 'Emergent Strategy', who said "Imagination is one of the spoils of colonisation, which in many ways is claiming who gets to imagine the future for a given geography. Losing the imagination is a symptom of trauma. Reclaiming the right to dream the future, strengthening the muscle to imagine together as Black people, is a revolutionary decolonizing activity. We are living in the ancestral imagination of others, with their longing for safety and abundance, a longing that did not include us or included us as enemy, fright, other... We are living now in the imagination of people who thought economic disparity and environmental destruction were acceptable costs for their power. It is our right and responsibility to write ourselves into the future."

We heard that assertion too in the first Culture Reset podcast launched this week - Postcards to the Future - with Adele Thomas and Marc Rees. Speaking of the future of Welsh theatre, Adele proposed, "Who is curating our stories... do we as a nation believe in the right to tell our own stories and to create our own future... We have to believe in ourselves and believe our narratives are worth fighting for because if we don't we risk total cultural erasure."

CULTURE RESET is designed to be a dynamic conversation between creative people where each identifies the core challenge for them at the centre of a culture reset and interrogates, explores, discerns and arrives at a new direction through an inherently creative process of reimagining. These challenges are fraught with the inequities of our society of course - the distribution of resources, of opportunity and power. And so that creative process for all 192 producers requires a careful consideration of our own privilege, a consideration of our values and our own intentions.

Another guest speaker, John McGrath, Artistic Director of Manchester International Festival, reflected on how his role has shifted as he prepares to launch the Factory: "To fulfil my role, our role [as producers] for these artists and for the societies they represent and the communities for which they speak," he suggested, "I have to ask a bigger question [than the parallel producing questions I would customarily ask] 'what is the change that this work, these artists, this practice demands and how do I make that change happen?' ... If we are not profoundly shaken by every work we present or produce, we shouldn't be doing this."

These provocations from John McGrath and Jasmine Wahi are now available on the Culture Reset website - along with that of Marcus Faustini - who impressed so many with his passion and determination to centre the experiences and desires of young people in his work in Rio.

We will continue to make as many of the resources and conversations from Culture Reset available publicly as possible over the next eight weeks and actively encourage you to take part in the conversation on social media using the hashtag #culturereset.

There are public strands such as the Podcast series and forthcoming Instagram (@culture.reset) lives, and the resources will grow over the summer informed and changed by the contributions of participants and by the conversations across the UK.

A culture reset for good is a collective effort. It is complex and exhausting. As the news across our sector continues to bring at one moment hope, and at another devastating loss, we are going to need radical hope.

- Here are a few suggestions of where to start:
- Join our podcast series, [postcards to the future](#), by Claire Doherty and David Micklem for interviews with Marc Rees, Adele Thomas, Bryony Kimming, Sharmaine Lovegrove and more on your platform of choice (transcriptions also available on our website as the podcasts go live)
 - [Watch videos](#) from our opening Assembly by Jasmine Wahi, Marcus Faustini and John McGrath and keep an eye out for other videos contributions in the following weeks
 - Access [resources](#) made up of tools, reports and inspiration we have organised to help you with your personal reset
 - Review [who is on the CULTURE RESET programme](#) and connect with them, invite them to share their learning and to join your exploration
 - Connect with others who are debating what resetting culture means for them on twitter [#culturepeopleUK](#)
 - Join the Culture Reset [mailing list](#) to hear first about new videos, resources and insights as we publish them.

Richard Watts is instigator of and pro bono Exec Director at CULTURE RESET, CEO of people make it work and co-director of change creation.

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LIVERPOOL ROYAL COURT

Head of Finance and Administration
North West
Salary: £35,000 - £50,000 (per annum)

Executive Producer
Wales
Salary: £42,000 - £42,000 (per annum)

Head of Human Resources (part time)
South East
Salary: £40,000 - £44,000 (pro rata)

MIP

Digital Content Producer
North West
Salary: £32,000 - £32,000 (per annum)

Lighthouse

Creative Engagement Manager
South West
Salary: £28,000 - £28,000 (per annum)

STIVES SCHOOL OF PAINTING

Director
South West
Salary: 37,000 - 37,000 (pro rata)

PAKAPPA

General Manager
North West
Salary: £35,000 - £38,000 (pro rata)

ZL

Chair of the Board
South West

MIP

Music Events Manager
North West
Salary: £30,000 - £32,000 (per annum)

MIP

Head of Marketing and Audiences
North West
Salary: £45,000 - £50,000 (per annum)

OPEN EYE GALLERY

Tree Story - freelance positions
North West

Lighthouse

Ticket Sales Manager
South West
Salary: £27,750 - £27,750 (per annum)

BRISTOL OLD VIC

Artistic Director
South West
Salary: £80,000 - £85,000 (per annum)

the spark

Artistic Director
East Midlands
Salary: £42,000 - £45,000 (per annum)

PD

Artistic Director Joint CEO
South West
Salary: £45,000 - £45,000 (per annum)

The Spring

Director & Chief Executive
South West
Salary: £40,000 - £44,000 (per annum)

MIP

Executive Producer
North West
Salary: £54,000 - £58,000 (per annum)

FEDERAL PRODUCTION

Programme Manager
North West
Salary: £32,798 - £35,336 (per annum)

MARKETPLACE

Programme Director
East
Salary: £35,000 - £40,000 (per annum)

Kern Music

Senior Leader (Operations)
South East
Salary: £42,000 - £42,000 (per annum)

Head of Transformation
South West
Salary: £47,773 - £49,879 (per annum)

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