

we are culture people

a reflection on what we are noticing,
questioning and making in culture

OCTOBER 2026

a note from us

The need for space, silence and time to think...

October feels like a moment to pause, take stock and make a little room for what we might be missing. We've been thinking about what it means to care for the people doing the work of culture — how we make space for reflection, create environments where people feel safe to contribute, and recognise the small but significant things that help organisations change.

This month, that thinking runs through our work around leadership, belonging and the conditions we create for people to do their best work. It's also been at the heart of our September Essential Conversations, where we've been making space to think together, share experiences and ask better questions about the way we work. And as we look ahead to our next conversation on governance, we're asking: what might become possible if we made a little more room?

what we're noticing

What if the thing cultural leaders need most right now isn't another training session, another framework or another thing to add to an already full to-do list?

What if they need permission to stop?

In a sector where the demands on leaders rarely seem to let up, it can be difficult to find the space to pause, process what's happening and make sense of what we already know.

But thinking takes time. So does listening to ourselves, noticing what's changing around us and working out what we really need.

In her latest thought piece, Vicki Igbokwe-Ozoagu, our Director of Empowerment, explores why making space for silence might be an important part of supporting cultural leaders.



It's a reminder that sometimes, moving forward begins with giving ourselves permission to stop.

→ **Read Vicki's thought piece on LinkedIn**

a little space to pause...

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We talk a lot about the importance of care, reflection and making space for people to do their best work. But how do we make that possible when the days are full, the inbox keeps growing and there's always something else that needs our attention?

Sometimes, it starts with something small.

Leadership flows most organically when we feel safe and grounded on the inside. When we're connected to ourselves, we can meet what's in front of us with more presence, clarity, and choice — rather than being pulled along by stress or reactivity. Zara Rush, people make it work's creative producer and holistic coach has recorded this short grounding breathwork and meditation exercise as an invitation to pause, come back into your body, and create a little more space within. Take a few minutes to settle in, breathe, and notice what shifts. You can return to it whenever you need to reconnect with yourself before stepping into leadership moments, a conversation, or simply the rest of your day.

→ **Listen to the guided grounding meditation**

conversations we need to have

Can we make online spaces feel safer?



Online meetings have opened up possibilities for connection, collaboration and participation across our sector. But being in the same virtual room doesn't necessarily mean everyone feels equally able to contribute.

What makes a space feel safe enough to speak honestly, ask a difficult question, disagree or simply be yourself? And what responsibilities do we share in creating those conditions when we meet online?

These aren't just questions about technology or meeting etiquette. They're questions about belonging, power, participation and the cultures we create together.

In a new reflection, Laura Twemlow, our Head of Belonging, explores questions of safety in Zoom spaces and invites us to think more carefully about how we show up for one another online.

Because the spaces we create matter — including the virtual ones.

→ **Read Laura's reflection on Zoom safety**

people making it work

Inclusion is a practice, not a destination



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What does it look like when inclusion becomes part of how an organisation works, rather than something it simply aspires to?

Karen Turner and the team at National Youth Theatre have been exploring that question through an ongoing commitment to accessible and inclusive practice, from creating more inclusive pathways into the creative sector to rethinking the experience of audiences, participants and associates.

One recent example is Let the Right One In, the NYT REP's production at Underbelly Boulevard Soho earlier this year. A "Relaxed Horror", the production built on relaxed performance principles while exploring how audiences might be supported to experience the tension and sensory intensity of horror. This included visual guides, chill-out spaces and an experimental system of visual cues that gave audiences advance warning of moments of high tension or sudden sensory changes.

What matters here isn't that every experiment works perfectly first time. It's the willingness to test, listen, learn and adapt — working alongside disabled artists, access specialists, audiences and young performers to understand what could be better.

Making accessibility and anti-ableist practice part of an organisation's values means continuing to ask questions, challenge assumptions and turn learning into action. We're celebrating Karen and the brilliant people working alongside her at NYT, and the commitment to creating more inclusive opportunities for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent young people.

Meaningful change isn't a finished product. It's a practice we keep working at.

reflecting on our work

What happens when we make space to talk?



September was a reminder of why we need spaces to think together.

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Across three Essential Conversations sessions, we made room for the questions, challenges and experiences that shape working in culture — the things that can be difficult to navigate alone, and that often become clearer when we have the chance to hear from one another.

These conversations aren't about having all the answers. They're about being curious, sharing what we're learning, making sense of what we're experiencing and discovering what might be possible when we approach things differently.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, contributed their experiences and helped create the conditions for honest, thoughtful conversation. We're taking those reflections with us into the months ahead.

Our next Essential Conversation: Radical Purposeful Governance

What if governance was radically relevant to your organisation today — shaped around what's really needed and what will help you drive your vision? What if your board was a team, not just a meeting? And what if you'd chosen the people you wanted to give that power to?

On 10 November, we're opening up a conversation about governance, purpose and the relationships that help organisations move forward. A chance to look beyond structures and formalities, and ask what governance could become if it genuinely served the work, the people and the vision.

Good governance isn't just about what happens around the board table. It's about how we make decisions, share responsibility and create the conditions for our organisations to thrive.

→ Find out more and join us for Radical Purposeful Governance

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creating transformation

Creating Transformation 2027

Bookings are now open for Creating Transformation 2027, our flagship programme for people and organisations navigating change in arts and culture. If you or someone you know is thinking about what's next for your team or your organisation, this is an opportunity to make space for the thinking, relationships and practical work that transformation asks of us.

→ **Explore Creating Transformation**



Everyone's NPO Club

Working towards an NPO application? Whether you're applying for the first time, preparing for the next round or hoping to return to the portfolio, Everyone's NPO Club offers a fortnightly space to share insight, learn together and find a little more community and care along the way.

→ **Find out more about Everyone's NPO Club**

a final reflection...

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A little more room...

What might change if we made a little more room?

Room to think before reacting. To listen before deciding. To ask the questions we don't yet have answers to. To make mistakes, try something different and learn as we go.

Room for people to show up as they are, to challenge what isn't working and to imagine what could be.

We're often looking for the next thing to do, the next solution, the next step forward. But perhaps change doesn't always begin with doing more.

Perhaps it begins with making space...