



Sonya Dyer
The Manifesto Club

18 May 2007

Dear Sonya

Re: Boxed in: how cultural diversity policies constrict black artists
<http://www.manifestoclub.com/files/BOXEDIN.pdf> (Accessed 18 May 2007)

We would like to formally respond to your article that was recently published on the Internet.

We welcome a public debate about diversity policy in the arts. Your article makes a number of interesting comments about the need to widen our understanding of diversity by taking into account other socio-economic factors apart from ethnicity. The Inspire Fellowship Programme fits into diversity policies of Arts Council England. It is true that what you refer to as 'the black arts movement' of the 1980s had a role in shaping our current policy agenda. However, our diversity policies have also been shaped by the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) that followed the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry by Lord Macpherson.

The Race Relations Amendment Act requires all public bodies to have in place 'race equality schemes' to combat possible discrimination at the institutional level. We are satisfied that the Inspire Fellowship Programme is based upon sound statistical evidence that shows that there is an under-representation of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in all senior positions in museums and galleries including curating.

Whilst we welcome a debate about diversity, we sincerely regret that the author did not check her facts with those who manage the Inspire Fellowship Programme prior to publication. Therefore below we correct the factual errors that appear in the article.

p4 The article only refers to National Inspire hosts. The Inspire Fellowship Programme spans the museum and gallery sectors and involves 11 institutions: Barbican Art Gallery, British Council, British Museum, the Hayward, Institute of Contemporary Arts, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Tate Modern, Serpentine Gallery, V&A, Whitechapel.



p18 *'Diversity schemes like Inspire and Decibel create a culture of dependency'*

Since Inspire has only been in operation for less than two years, we are interested to know the evidence on which this statement is based.

'ACE has barely analysed the kinds of people who are applying to its own diversity schemes.'

Inspire had 241 applications for the two cohorts and we analysed the applicants in the following ways:

- A Ethnicity
- B Education
- C Place of origin
- D Shortlisted candidates using a range of selection criteria including work experience in museums and galleries
- E Shortlisted candidates were interviewed by panels that included host venue curators, independent artists/curators and ACE staff.

In addition we have commissioned Baroness Young to evaluate the Inspire Programme. Part of her brief has been to give us an analysis of the selection process so that it can be further improved.

p19 *'...not all of the Fellows are based in curatorial departments of the host institution.'*

Out of the 11 Fellows 10 are based in curatorial departments. One Fellow is based in the education department of a host institution in which all of the contemporary programmes are developed.

p20 The article claimed Inspire Fellows receive a 'lack of support'. This is the package of support we offer to all Fellows:

- Support from a full-time Programme Manager
- Monthly tutorials with the Inspire Tutor
- Bi-weekly training programme with a programme of international speakers led by a dedicated Inspire Tutor
- Personal training allowances of £1000
- Career development support from a dedicated mentor
- Participation in the Cultural Leadership Programme training sessions

We have also provided training for supervisors at the host venues as part of the package.

It is also claimed that participation in *'the [Inspire Fellowship] scheme might be a stigma'*



One Fellow has already been appointed to a full-time curator position at a leading national museum – far from being a ‘stigma’, participation in the programme appears to be a career advantage – rather like the Clore Leadership Programme.

p22 You state that there is a *'lack of high-quality applicants'* for Inspire. This is absolutely not the case. We conducted 55 interviews drawn from 241 applicants. 46% of the total number of applicants had MA, MPhil or PhD qualifications. All shortlisted candidates were highly qualified and had a lot of potential – yet most of them were not working in mainstream museum and gallery venues.

We do hope that you will be in position to publish these corrections on your website, given that we were not consulted prior to publication.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Sarah Wason in cursive script.

Sarah Wason
Head of Visual Arts

Handwritten signature of Conrad Bodman in cursive script.

Conrad Bodman
Senior Visual Arts Officer

Handwritten signature of Errol Francis in cursive script.

Errol Francis
Inspire Programme Manager