

SYLLABUS - WHAT IS IT?

Syllabus is a collaboratively produced alternative learning programme in its sixth year that supports ten artists across ten months. Syllabus VI is led by Wysing Arts Centre, Eastside Projects, Iniva, Spike Island and Studio Voltaire.

Each Syllabus is built around a series of intensive gatherings, which the ten selected artists, curators and artists who work with the partner organisations and two external Artistic Advisors collaboratively develop. The participating artists actively contribute to its design and delivery across the ten months, working with individual organisations to shape each retreat.

Syllabus VI aims to reach artists with a range of practices and artistic approaches and bring together individuals from across the UK who have not yet had access to similar programmes. We are particularly keen to support people who are currently underrepresented in the visual arts including artists with Black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage, those who have faced socio-economic barriers, artists who identify as LGBTQ+, and those with disabilities. We ask applicants to make this clear when applying, if applicable.

WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Syllabus was established in 2015 by six innovative UK arts organisations Wysing Arts Centre (Cambridge), Eastside Projects (Birmingham), New Contemporaries (National), S1 Artspace (Sheffield), Spike Island (Bristol) and Studio Voltaire (London). Iniva (London) joined as a partner in 2017. New Contemporaries left the partnership in 2018 and the NewBridge Project (Newcastle) was a guest partner in 2019. Due to S1 Artspace's capital development plans, it will be stepping back Syllabus for a short period.

Individuals and organisations who will collaborate with the Syllabus VI artists, and who will be involved across the ten months, are Ruth Claxton, Eastside Projects; Sepake Angiama, Tavian Hunter, and Simina Neagu, Iniva; Laura Harford and Nicola Wright, Studio Voltaire; Carmen Juliá and Rosa Tyhurst, Spike Island; John Eng Kiet Bloomfield, Wysing Arts Centre. For Syllabus VI, artist Jade Montserrat and curator Amanprit Sandhu have been appointed as Artistic Advisors.

The first iteration of the programme, The Syllabus in 2015, was led by artist Andy Holden. Contributing practitioners included Barby Asante, Ruth Beale, Richard Long, Goshka Macuga, Pil and Galia Kollektiv, Niki Russell, Emma Smith, Nayia Yiakoumaki, Richard Wentworth, Keith Wilson, Celine Condorelli, James Langdon and Rehana Zahman. With additional support from John Akomfrah, Benedict Drew, Kathy Noble, Eddie Peake, Marinella Senatore, Mike Sperlinger and Milly Thompson.

The second year of the programme in 2016 included artist Milly Thompson and curator George Vasey as Artistic Advisors. Contributing artists and curators from year two included Jeremy Akerman, Polly Brannan, Stuart Bertolotti-Bailey, Monster Chetwynd, Anthea Hamilton, Mark Leckey, Katrina Palmer, Cally Spooner, Jonathan P. Watts and Dr. Zoé Whitley. It also included a trip to Documenta IX in Athens.

Syllabus III included artists Jesse Darling and Harold Offeh as artistic advisors. Contributors included Larry Achiampong, Barby Asante, Ross Birrel, Jamie Crewe, Sabel Gavaldon, Ellie Harrison, Nav Haq, Nadia Hebson, Young In Hong, Lucy Lopez, Evan Ifekoya, Randolph Mathews, Trevor Mathison, Sofia Niazi, Richard Parry, Imran Perretta, Holly Pester, Rory Pilgrim, Rosalie Schweiker, Tai Shani, Dr Helen

Smith, Richard Taylor, The Other MA (ToMA) and DM Withers. The programme included a trip to Glasgow International.

Syllabus IV included Sonya Dyer and Helen Nisbet as artistic advisors. Contributors included: Celine Condorelli, Adham Faramawy, Jamie Harper, Sophie Hope, Serena Lee, Taylor Le Melle, Hamish MacPherson, Ben Messih, Jenny Moore, Hardeep Pandhal, Morgan Quaintance, Rosalie Schweiker, Louise Shelley, Victoria Sin, Hassan Vawda, Monika Walenko and Andrea Luka Zimmermann.

Syllabus V began in September 2019 and so far has included contributions from Leslie Guy, Sumaya Kassim, Modern Clay, Ciara Lenihan, Nicola Singh and Linda Stupart. Barby Asante and Louise Shelley are the artistic advisors.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE?

The programme will be structured around a series of gatherings which all participating artists will be required to attend. During the first retreat at Wysing, Syllabus artists, individuals connected to the partner organisations and the Artistic Advisors will collaborate to identify broad themes. These will form the starting point for an evolving, responsive curriculum that will support individual and collective artistic development and provide access to networks and knowledge across the next ten months. Subsequent weekend gatherings will be hosted at partner venues in December, February, April and June, usually running from Friday to Sunday. The Syllabus will conclude with a final gathering at Wysing in July.

Syllabus VI will foreground the skills, talents and experiences of the cohort itself as a key resource. We are looking for artists who are able to take an active role in leading and contributing to elements of the curriculum, from sharing skills and experiences to organising workshops and leading reading groups for the wider group.

During periods between gatherings, texts and reading lists are uploaded onto a shared drive which will also support discussions to be continued remotely. Artists will benefit from:

- The opportunity to rethink individual practices through an intensive programme of gatherings, hosted by the partner organisations.
- Working together to collaboratively shape and develop a reflexive, collective learning experience.
- Critical conversations about ideas and work in progress with a supportive, national networks of artists, curators and organisations.
- Becoming part of a new network of artist peers
- Introductions to, and connections with, arts organisations, communities and networks in cities across the UK and access to new networks, expertise and resources.
- Two 1-2-1 meetings with the Artistic Advisors over the course of the year
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WHAT DOES A GATHERING LOOK LIKE?

Examples of previous gatherings can be viewed through Wysing Arts Centre's website here:
<http://www.wysingartscentre.org/archive/retreats/>

WHAT HAVE ALUMNI THOUGHT OF THE SYLLABUS?

2015 Alumni: Simon Bayliss, Noel Clueit, Susie Green, Mathew Parkin, Rory Pilgrim, Jessica Sarah Rinland, Tom Salt, Lucy Steggals, Tom Varley and Rafal Zajko.

2016 Alumni: Mira Calix, Faye Claridge, Mike Harvey, E. Jackson, Tyler Mallison, Nika Neelova, Tom Smith, Dylan Spencer-Davidson, Thomas Whittle and Laura Wilson.

2017 Syllabus Artists: Frederica Agbah, Chris Alton, Conor Baird, Ilker Cinarel, Phoebe Davies, Freya Dooley, Rose Gibbs, Jill McKnight, Ben Sanderson and Karis Upton.

2018 Syllabus Artists: Scott Caruth, Libita Clayton, Jessica Coleman, Bettina Fung, Laura Hindmarsh, Beth Kettel, David Lisser, Alicja Rogalska, Kirsty Russell and Abigail Sidebotham.

2019 Syllabus Artists: Sophie Blagden, Juliet Davis-Dufayard, Yuxin Jiang, Hwa Young Jung, Sarai Kirshner, Jack Lewdjaw, Sarah Maple, Duncan Poulton and Aliaskar Torkaliaskari

"In all honesty I expected this year to make me more more professional - but it has made me more honest, raw, personal and added an energy to my work that I think my undergrad and working in the art sector had begun to numb out of me."

"I feel like I have developed as an artist in ways that I could not have envisaged a year ago. I feel much more confident, particularly in terms of breaking media boundaries and working more conceptually. I feel that The Syllabus has acted as a reliable and focused audience for my work and ideas, and has made me more aware and confident about how these connect within a wider field. I generally feel much more connected and supported outside the South West, which is an exciting prospect"

"One of my aims when applying for Syllabus was to increase my network beyond the bubble I had been working in - to meet artists practicing elsewhere in the country and find out what was going on with them. These expectations have been completely exceeded."

"Looking back at the variety, depth and sheer complexity of each retreat, it has been an immensely challenging and illuminating experience. The generosity of all the partners and contributors has been amazing – the level of commitment and care has been deeply inspiring and motivating"

"I found the Syllabus an excellent test bed for new ideas and work. The constant of my fellow participants and the addition of a new audience at each retreat meant I was confident in taking risks that I would have otherwise reconsidered. This opportunity to fail is enormously useful when you are trying to figure out how far you can push different aspects of your work."

"I was extremely shy and socially anxious at the beginning of the program and struggled greatly with public presentations of all kinds. Having to repeatedly do these things and being occasionally pushed out of comfort zones was really helpful. I still have to work a lot at these issues, but Syllabus has made me much more confident that I can and that this is worthwhile."

“It has given me encouragement to continue my practice at a time when it's felt difficult to do so...”

“As someone who did not receive formal art training and therefore interested in alternative art education, Syllabus provided an invaluable experience. It gave me dedicated time to learn amongst artists and opportunity to work with arts institutions. Being able to visit different parts of the UK and meet local artists was beneficial. I will say that I have gained confidence since being on the programme and came out of it with fresh ideas and desire to continue cultivating artists/peer-led support and development.”

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Access to the Syllabus VI programme is free. Artists will need to fund their own travel and accommodation, but sessions are planned well in advance to give time for participants to book this at a low cost travel.

Accommodation is provided at the first and final retreats at Wysing Arts Centre. Partners try to provide lunch and dinner during a gathering or to source low-cost options.

Costs will depend on where you live in relation to the gathering locations, but participating artists in previous years have estimated the additional costs as being between **£800** and **£1000**.

The overall cost to deliver Syllabus VI is £45,000 per year. The direct costs of delivering is £18,000, which has been raised from Arts Council England. The remaining £27,000 is the contribution in-kind from the partner organisations to enable the programme to happen.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAKE THE PROGRAMME FREE AND WHAT CHANGES CAN WE EXPECT?

Syllabus originated as a response to the rising costs of higher education and the lack of alternative development opportunities. For the first five years artists paid a fee of £500 to participate, which we felt was very fair compared to the cost of formal education or training. This fee went directly towards programming costs.

We have always recognised that one of the biggest barriers to participation has been the cost of taking part and have worked to attract funding from elsewhere but have never had consistent success. Therefore after five years, we have decided to reduce the budget of the programme as a means to remove this barrier.

Evaluations of the Syllabus tell us that one of its greatest strengths is the peer network forged each year between the participating artists. With a reduced programming budget, we expect the programme to be re-focused on this peer network and for participating artists to make pro-active contributions to the programme.

CAN I APPLY FOR SUPPORT?

The partners are happy to write letters of support for participants who wish to make applications for professional development or travel grants.

Here are links to some funders who have supported previous participants:

- [Arts Council England Developing Your Creative Practice](#)
- [Creative Scotland Open Project Funding](#)
- [Arts Council Wales](#)
- [Oppenheim-John Downes Memorial Trust](#)

HOW DO I APPLY?

Applications to the programme are made through an open call from February 2020.

Applicants need to have been out of education for at least 4 years. This means you will have completed your course in or before 2016. This is because Syllabus has been designed to provide opportunities for artists who have been developing their practice outside of formal structures and who have perhaps been unable to access the kind of critical support and input Syllabus offers. We also welcome applications from people who are self taught or who have not followed a conventional route into art.

We will be looking to establish a cohort that represents a diversity of cultural perspectives and of artistic practices and applicants need to be willing to both develop their own work and actively contribute to the development of the curriculum.

We cannot support international travel so if you are not based in the UK, you would need to be able to commit to attending the sessions at each location throughout the ten months.

Please visit Wysing's website at www.wysingartscentre.org and click on Opportunities to find out more about how to make an application to Syllabus V.

Applications may be made via video or audio, to support those with dyslexia, rather than written form. If you require any further support to make your application, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at info@wysingartscentre.org or visit one of our drop-in sessions found on the open call form.