

SHIFT

SHIFT is about learning disabled and neurodivergent artists taking their rightful place around the table - having frank discussions, sharing ideas and articulating aims.

It involves a shifting of focus, platforming and attitudes.

- Jennifer Gilbert

New digital platform **SHIFT** exists to give recognition to and amplify the voices and works of learning disabled and neurodivergent visual artists across the UK. **SHIFT** begins by looking at the lives and art practices of eight learning disabled and neurodivergent artists, capturing their stories through short accessible documentary films, artwork documentation and written text. It places the artists and their voices centre stage. This is not merely physical voices but, for those that are non-speaking, their art practice acts as their voice and is just as powerful as the spoken word.



Richard Hunt, Dragon of the Ocean, 2020

SHIFT is needed to continue to challenge curators, galleries, and mainstream arts collections around the poor representation of these artists, as well as looking to champion acceptance without prejudice. Initial online conversations with these artists about their art and its placement, will lead to wider conversations with gatekeepers and curators at museums and galleries moving forwards. This is to identify areas for change, and to make decisions on how to implement changes in meaningful and inclusive ways.

Jennifer Gilbert of the **Jennifer Lauren Gallery** in Manchester set up **SHIFT** in 2020 (with the launch significantly affected due to Covid-19) following research and conversations with learning disabled and neurodivergent artists about where and how their works are placed, showcased, and written about. Research also took place with several Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists around the kind of content they wanted to see, and the best ways to access it. Jennifer came to the realisation, through research and first-hand experience, that this group of artists and their works are being lost within art history, are often not being properly documented and recorded, and rarely appear in gallery and museum shows across the UK. Recent discussions with the Plus Tate network have also raised the need for these important conversations to not only continue, but to be aimed at those with the power, be solution focused, and with an acknowledgement that something needs to be done right now.

The **SHIFT** website has launched with many accessibility measures in place including the YouAccess widget, which makes adaptations to the how the site can be viewed, for varying needs; downloadable Easy Read PDFs; BSL (British Sign Language) interpretations for video content; audio readings of longform text and audio descriptions of a work by each artist.

SHIFT is being launched on 3 December 2021 – International Day of Disabled People. The eight artists are: Siddharth Gadiyar, James Gladwell, Thompson Hall, Richard Hunt, Nnena Kalu, Cameron Morgan, Michelle Roberts and Leslie Thompson.

This project has been made possible with funding support from Necessity. For more information, please email Jennifer / info@jenniferlaurengallery.com

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