

This guide invites arts institutions, arts workers and peer artists to critically reflect on their approach to working with artists and communities who experience intersections of diverse gender, sexuality and culture. Institutions and arts workers have a duty of care to ensure the safety of artists and communities engaged in their spaces.

Our aim is to offer space to consider the specificities and complexities of experiences of gender, sexuality and culture and to share suggestions for adopting culturally safer practice. Here's what we explore in this guide:

- Intersectionality
- Cultural competency
- Prioritising discretion and disclosure of identity
- Safety tools for action

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a concept used to demonstrate that no one axis of oppression such as race, gender, sexuality, class, or ability can be regarded separately from others. Intersectionality highlights the complex, cumulative interaction between identities and unequal power relations that structure our experience in diverse and often contradictory ways.

An intersectional approach acknowledges that a person will have multiple, overlapping and intersecting identities, and will express themselves within their communities in ways that may not compromise their safety. An intersectional approach recognises that systems of oppression will manifest differently within communities and that people who intersect these identities navigate this complexity on a daily basis.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency is an awareness of the specificity of one's own cultural values and worldview; and an awareness that those values or worldviews are not necessarily universal. This applies at an individual, interpersonal and institutional level. Specific communities will hold diverse ideas and practices,

informed by their particular social, political, economic, geographic, cultural, and spiritual contexts. Cultural competency acknowledges that identity can be multifaceted and complex; centres value and care for relationships; and ensures the safety of all participants in a project.

Building a culturally competent institution means generating a culture where knowledge is led by those with relevant lived experiences. This can't be learned in a one-day training session, it is the life work of building awareness and sensitivity, continual self-reflection, accountability, taking responsibility for mistakes and continuing to learn and grow. Cultural competency is moving beyond the idea of inclusivity and working towards a space that enables a genuine sense of belonging for all people, free from judgement and discrimination.

Scenarios occurring within the arts sector that might require an understanding of cultural competency include (but are not limited to):

- A council arts worker talks openly to the local newspaper about a forthcoming exhibition and inadvertently outs an artist about their sexuality. The article is printed without the artist's consent and is seen by the artist's family.
- The gallery asks a writer/publication to review the work without mentioning that discretion around the artists gender is a priority, as they have multiple gender expressions across their multiple communities.
- An artist is invited to participate in a Q & A session at a gallery, but is offered no support before or after the session from gallery staff as to how they would like culturally compromising questions to be mediated.
- A trans-femme artist is participating in a residency with strict contact hours. She is expected to travel in peak hour to fulfil the conditions of the residency. Public transport is often not a safe option during peak hour.

Self-reflection is a critical part of cultural competency and starts with analysing power dynamics and internal assumptions. Some questions we can always ask ourselves to stimulate this process are:

- Are you in a position where you have the power to compromise the safety of the artist you are working with?
- Could any artist you have engaged have a reason to feel that they have been engaged because of their identity? If they might feel this, have you taken steps to demonstrate the reasons for their engagement?
- Are you mindful to not assume anything about any person's sexuality, gender identity, cultural background, experience of culture, faith background, or class background?
- Are you mindful to not assume that sexuality, gender and culturally diverse people need to look, act or talk in a certain way based on your own experiences or broader cultural stereotypes?

PRIORITISING DISCRETION AND DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITY

Prioritising discretion about the disclosure of people's identities (gender, sexuality, race) is important, as an artist or community member might identify with parts of their identity differently in public and private spaces. For example, an artist might not wish to disclose their sexuality to their family, friends, employer, colleagues or acquaintances. Similarly, an artist may not wish to disclose their cultural identity. Failing to practice discretion can have serious consequences. While some artists build their practice on exploring their LGBTQIA+ identities, others need to keep these experiences coded and discreet since this information may compromise their safety. Disclosure or revealing of someone's sexuality or gender identity can cause them to risk exclusion from their communities or compromise their safety and security.

In addition, an artist might not wish for their work to be understood through a lens of gender and sexuality. Assuming that people who identify as LGBTQIA+ should publicly disclose their identity by 'coming out' fails to acknowledge the nuance and sensitivities of intersectional identity. Coming out isn't a one-

off event – it is constant and continual. Each time a person incorrectly assumes anything about someone's identity or background, that person is faced with a choice of how they respond – taking into account possible reactions, potential consequences, safety risks, and available energy. Reducing the chance of these interactions occurring is important. A more culturally nuanced approach is Seknheh Hammoud-Beckett's proposed reframe of 'coming out' to 'inviting in' - where one may selectively invite trusted and respected people into the treasured knowledge of their identity.

It is imperative that the artist lead this discussion and that discretion is a priority. This approach considers the experience of the artist as intersectional and is a key indicator of cultural competency.

SAFETY TOOLS FOR ACTION:

Self-determination:

- Create dialogue and invite artists to lead discussions about their safety.
- Be mindful that an artist might use different language and occupy different aspects of identity across different contexts. Clarify how the artist would like to be referred to by name and pronoun in specific contexts.
- Seek consent to share information about names and pronouns with others working in the space who need to know.
- Ensure you involve the artist in every process of information sharing you are involved in: media, social media, publications, advertisements, judging panels, and reviewers.
- Ensure your project time frames include opportunity and adequate time for the artist to review copy, photography and promotional materials prior to publication.
- Consider the value you place on the expertise and labour (emotional and physical) of those you consult with.

GUIDE: SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH ARTISTS AND COMMUNITIES FROM DIVERSE GENDERS, SEXUALITIES AND CULTURES

Identification:

- Ensure that people are able to self-identify with the language that serves them around their gender, sexuality and culture, including use of names, pseudonyms and pronouns. This can be achieved by asking open questions during initial meetings; and by ensuring open response fields and non-binary options on paperwork.
- Ensure that it is not mandatory to submit an ID photo in application processes.

Transparency:

- Be transparent around who will be involved in all aspects of a process from initial assessment through to project completion so an artist or community can know who they will be engaging with.

Discretion:

- Ensure that there is space for people to include their preference around disclosure, safety concerns, and requests for confidentiality.
- Ensure personal information is stored securely.
- Clarify what information and language the artist consents to you sharing about their identity and work.
- Maintaining an open line of communication throughout the duration of a project where an artist or worker could let someone know if their pronoun name or level of discretion needs to change.
- Include a document outlining photo consent and safety provisions in your artist commission or contracting process.
- Clarify the process for providing informed consent about photography.

Accessibility:

- Be mindful that an artist might use different language and occupy different aspects of identity in different contexts. Ensure that this information is passed on accordingly and with the artists consent.
- Consider the physical safety around access to bathrooms, parking, and transportation.

Institutional culture:

- Ensure that you have considered levels of cultural competency of all staff members and personnel.
- Ensure all staff attend regular cultural competency training.
- Create a culture in the workplace where articles, resources and information can be openly shared to support the ongoing development of cultural competency.
- Create a safe and respectful process for challenging and calling in harmful language and behaviour through shared accountability, both conversationally and through complaint pathways.
- When appointing curators, engaging artists or initiating new community engagements, create a procedure to ensure identity and lived experience is a primary consideration.

Governance:

- Ensure there is an adequate complaints pathway and a grievance policy publicly available for artists to follow in the event of a harmful disclosure.
- Ensure corporate governance processes such as policy and procedure documents, constitutional adherence, and risk management include reference to cultural safety and disclosure.
- Review the composition of decision making structures such as boards, panels and committees. Ensure there is a diversity of identities and lived experiences.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

One Foot In podcast: www.spreaker.com/show/one-foot-in

Home is Where our Story Begins: <https://sayitoutloud.org.au/homeis/>

Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council: <https://www.agmc.org.au/>

Clear Expectations: https://visualarts.net.au/media/uploads/files/Clear_Expectations_Guidelines_FA_Digital_4HJr2ES.pdf

Advance Diversity Services Multicultural LGBTQIA+ Support Directory: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12hsIBhcLt7mY-C7d355TNIGxFYV5E1JP/view>

Diversity Arts Australia Creative Equity Toolkit: <https://creativeequitytoolkit.org/>

Hammoud-Beckett, S. (2007). Azima ila hayati: An Invitation to my life. Narrative Exploration into Sexual Identity. International Journal of Narrative therapy and Community Work, Vol 1, pp 29-40.: <https://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Azima-ila-Hayati-Narrative-conversations-about-sexual-identity-by-Sekneh-Hammoud-Beckett.pdf>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Twenty10 inc GLCS NSW

Twenty10 inc GLCS NSW are a LGBTQIA+ youth organisation, offering specialised services for young people across housing, mental health, counselling and social support. They are also the NSW State Partner for QLife - Australia's only free, national and all ages LGBTQIA+ phone and web support service. Twenty10 also works in LGBTQIA+ community suicide prevention, delivers LGBTQIA+ inclusivity training, performs advocacy, and offers consulting for organisations and service providers across most sectors.

Samia Sayed

Gadigal-based poet and artist Samia Sayed embodies text through performance, interrogating and revising notions of religion, culture, and gender. She is also a Client Engagement officer at Twenty10 inc GLCS NSW and is on the Aurora Foundation's advisory board for the LGBTQIA+ Muslim community.

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