

Stella Barnes CV

Participatory Artist, Facilitator, Arts Consultant
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I apply my extensive creative facilitation and leadership experience and skills to a wide range of projects and contexts; supporting organisations and creative teams to engage in new thinking; project development; relationship building and strategy development. As an artist I co-create with community groups, enabling people on the margins to have their voices heard through creativity.

Current Freelance Work

- Network Lead, *Mainspring Arts*, co-creating a national network for neuro-divergent creatives. (2025-current)
- Associate, *Greater Manchester Arts Sustainability Team (GMAST)*, developing engagement of freelance creatives and delivering creative workshops. (2025-current)
- Consultant at *A New Direction* working on strategic projects: an exploration of organisational and partnership ethics; researching and designing a strategy for cultural participation of Care Experienced Children and Young People, including co-creating an ethical value-led resource and a resource about Safeguarding children in the era of AI (2017-current)
- Joint PhD Supervisor, *Ambrose Musiyiwa University of Manchester*, *Listening to the Voices of Refugee Artists*. (2020-current)

Recent Roles

Creative Director and Joint CEO, Community Arts North West (CAN)

2019-2023

Strategic and creative lead of a well-established arts charity in Manchester for 4.5 years. Responsible for developing and delivering of an artistically diverse, socially engaged arts programme; responding to the ambitions and aspirations of Greater Manchester's diverse communities. Connected programmes to wider cultural sector initiatives; brokered dynamic partnerships bringing communities, artists and the arts sectors together with third sector, charities and public bodies. Lead a diverse team of Creative Producers and Freelancers and successfully leading the organisation during the global pandemic. Established a new artists training programme and responsible for writing successful NPO and Manchester City Council funding bids 2023-2026. Member of Greater Manchester Cultural Leaders Group, implementing a more democratic leadership consortium for the city region. www.can.uk.com

Director of Participation, Brixton House (formally Ovalhouse)

2004-2017

Strategic and creative lead for participation in a leading London fringe theatre for 13 years; managing a large staff team and around 70 freelancers. Designing, leading and maintaining a portfolio of arts opportunities for young Londoners, including young people experiencing exclusion due to migration, racism, being disabled and being care experienced. Brokering major national and international partnerships including a long-term collaboration with The British Council in South Africa. Established The Paper Project a performance company led by young people with lived experience of forced migration. Facilitated/directed participatory arts workshops and training. Published a collection of essays about working with young refugees. [Brixton House](#)
[The Paper Project - YouTube](#) [BBC Arts - BBC Arts - Life Boat: Exploring the migrant experience on stage](#)

Other Roles

- Consultant and Creative Producer, *Creative Scene*, *Creative People and Place* project, West Yorkshire; supporting Arts Council England extension bid, policy development and leading the community programme, including major Eid celebration in 2025. (2024-25).

- Facilitator: discussions events and migrant artist network, Factory International, Manchester (2024-25)
- Training Course Designer, Cartwheel Arts, arts-education training for migrant artists. (2024-25)
- Volunteer, An-Najah National University, recruiting volunteer lecturers to teach Gazan students online. (2023-24)
- Research Fellow, University of Manchester, running focus groups and events to facilitate dialogue between refugee artists, academics, policy makers and the arts/cultural sector. (2023 to 2024)
- Associate Artist at *Counterpoints Arts*; leading creative projects with residents on Clapham Park Estate and with migrants and non-migrants in Halifax, West Yorkshire (2018)
- Director of Arts Council England funded creative writing and immersive storytelling performance project, *Stranger Tales*, *Southbank Centre* and *Platforma Festival*, Newcastle (2017-18)
- Artist in Residence, *idle women*, living and working on board a narrow boat, engaging women's groups in Kirklees (2017)
- External Evaluator for *Ensemble, Graeae Theatre Company's* young artists training programme (2018)
- Programme Lead and Acting Artistic Director, **GLYPT (Now Tramshed)**. Strategic and creative lead for two inclusion programmes for ten years: **Community Theatre Access Course** for young unemployed people and Director of '*Voices*', a six-year project for young refugees; artistic leadership for the company, for one year. Established one of the first sustained projects for young refugees in London and created new methodology and an appropriate ethical framework. Produced two award-winning short films with young refugees.
- Founding member of **Refugee and the Arts Initiative** set up by Arts Council England
- Established *Flight Paths* arts in education training for exiled artists, in partnership with The Lyric Hammersmith and Ovalhouse.
- Artistic Director, **Longfield Hall**, Camberwell, London (2017-18)
- Partner in establishing **Platforma**, national arts and migration network and biennial festival and advisor on youth participation strategy **Counterpoints Arts** (since 2010)
- Guest Lecturer, **Goldsmiths College, Royal Central School for Speech and Drama, Royal Holloway College, University of York St John's and University of East London**
- Led national research/consultation, Refugee Related Arts for **Arts Council England**
- Key note speaker at conferences including **Royal Holloway, Arts Council England, DfE, Refugee Week, Half Moon Theatre, Birmingham Drum, A New Direction, Sound Connections, British Council UK and Greece, University of Manchester.**
- Professional evaluations including: **Mousetrap Foundation, Creative Partnerships, Arts Council England, Graeae Theatre Company**
- Collaborator, **Institute for Global Ethics**, creative approaches for Ethical Leadership
- Euro-Africa Youth Summit Facilitator/Leadership Trainer, **Global Change Makers**
- Designed national training and guidance booklet, Using The Arts with Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers **Artswork**, Southampton
- Drama Facilitator, **Greenwich Mental Health Day Hospital**
- Senses of the City Grant Assessor as part of Refugees and the Arts Initiative **Arts Council England**
- Drama Teacher, **Mulberry School for Girls**, Tower Hamlets
- Board member and Chair of **Copleston Children's Centre**
- Professional mentoring for emerging practitioners

Training and Qualifications

Disability Awareness **Hear First**; Carbon Literacy; Safeguarding – annually; First Aid at Work – every 3 years; Unlearning Racism, **Racial Justice Network**; Trauma Informed Practice **Manchester City Council** 2020; Cultural Leadership Programmes: **Creative Exchange** and **School for Social Entrepreneurs**; Various Action Learning Sets; PGCE Drama, **Goldsmiths College**, BA Hons. Drama, **Bretton Hall College, Leeds University**

Info: Current DBS and clean driving license.

Examples of Project

Breaking the Code, University of Manchester Research Fellowship, working with a focus group of artists, with experience of forced migration; using Participatory Action Research and Systems Change Methodology to gather first-hand evidence of their experiences and co-create an event and Zine to engage the cultural sector, academics and policymakers in positive dialogue about the structural exclusion of refugees. (2023-24)

The Great British Welcome, UNHCR photography and journalism project my company, Community Arts North West, were invited to be part of, which profiled my colleague's asylum seeking story and the welcome she received from the organisation. The project culminated in an outdoor exhibition at More London. (2023)

Force of Nature, working with a group of women musicians and climate activists of Global South origin to co-create a community engagement project, using music and song-writing to connect with racially-minoritised Greater Manchester communities, excluded from the climate justice debate. (2023)

Lift the Ban, as part of the Horizons Festival, co-hosting and co-curating campaign events in partnership with Experts by Experience at **Refugee Action**, Manchester. The various events encouraged the cultural sector to support the campaign to lift the ban on employment for asylum seekers, by platforming advocates with lived experience, who shared their personal experience and the impact of the ban on employers. (2019-23)

idle women artist residency, a community engaged project on board a narrow boat, with women in West Yorkshire who live apart from their children, creating an immersive exhibition, raising awareness, of the women's issues and concerns, with social workers and other professionals and a co-created event with South Asian mothers in West Yorkshire, using the arts to facilitate conversations about health and well-being. (2017-18)

Stranger Tales, a verbatim story-making, theatre, and visual art project, working with members of the public, to share stories and open up dialogue about the impact of Brexit on British attitudes to migration and cultural diversity. Delivered in partnership with Southbank Centre and Counterpoints Arts. (2017-2018)

We are London, a thirteen-year theatre, filmmaking and visual arts project for young migrants and non-migrants living in London. Directing three performances, exhibitions or screening per year, collaborating with artists with lived experience of forced migration. (2004-2017)

The Paper Project I established a collective of young migrants, who made a series of highly visual, immersive performances inspired by first-hand experiences of migration and the EU's position on migrant boats crossing the Mediterranean. Each performance was aligned with a relevant campaigns and the performance *Safina Al Hayat* was featured in a BBC documentary. (2013-17)

Community Drug Programme working with voluntary sector colleagues in Camberwell, South London to provide creative opportunities for participants attending CDP. Using the arts to encourage self-advocacy and build understanding between staff and clients. (2007- 2010)

Shout, raised funds and providing space and a platform for a group of racially-minoritised LGBTQ+ young people to develop self-advocacy through music and performance poetry. (2006)

Belongings, possibly the first UK youth-led conference, bringing young refugees into dialogue with teachers, social workers and voluntary sector professionals; delivered in partnership with the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. (2004)