

IMPACT REPORT

2020-21



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We are Rising Arts Agency, a micro-agency based in Bristol that exists to support and advocate for the wants and needs of young people. Led by young creative thinkers, we advocate for sector and cultural change through campaigns, research projects, industry consultation and our creative agency services. Since we were founded by Kamina Walton in 2016 we've grown, changed and adapted to create impact on an even bigger scale.

www.rising.org.uk / hello@rising.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

We Are Rising

Between April 2020 and March 2021—a period of mass trauma, an unprecedented global pandemic—we saw people’s priorities and lives shift dramatically.

In that year, around the world people reckoned with systemic injustice: in the US they rose up for George Floyd; here, in Bristol, they tore Colston down. Like everywhere else, the city was feeling years of frustration and anger intensify, and we, as a growing community of creatives mobilising towards total social, racial and economic justice, suddenly found ourselves (and our work) more in demand than ever before.

None of the issues being shouted about were new to Rising; but juggling the sector’s new demands on our time whilst being there for our community and navigating personal trauma presented challenges we continue to grapple with now.



While much of the sector, and the world, remained closed, Rising responded loudly. We plastered a groundbreaking poster campaign—#WhoseFuture—across the city. We stayed open.



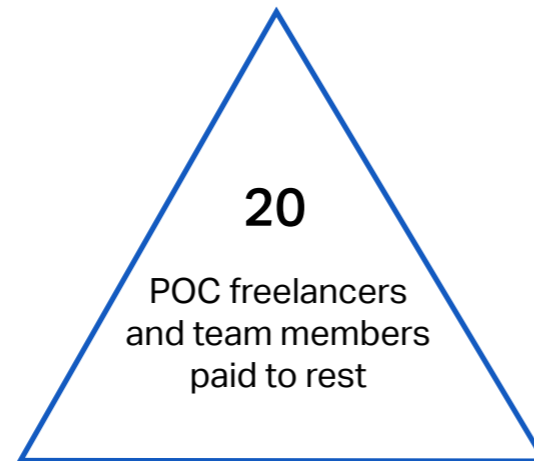
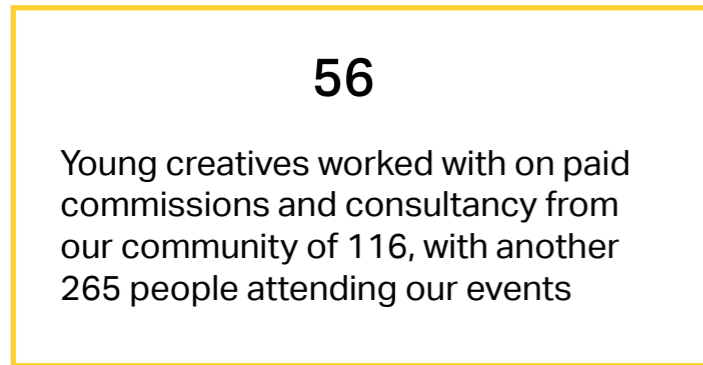


ACTIONS
FOR
PROLOGUES.

RISING
ARTS
AGENCY

THE STATS

2020/21 was an incomparable year of challenge, pain, growth and power.



2020...

30 New Regular Givers

We're Still Here / #LetsCreate

Right at the beginning of the pandemic we made a conscious decision to be more visible to our community; we released a statement—'We're Still Here'—and, as our worlds shrank to the size of a phone screen, shifted our output to share messages of support and creativity on social media to mitigate doomscrolling. From the 18th March–5th May we shared 10 prompts under the tag #LetsCreate on Instagram, drawing engagement from more than 300 people.



Become It

No longer able to safely bring people together in person, we also moved our workshop programme *Become It* online, and without the financial burden of room hire, travel expenses and snack budgets, were able to free up budget to commission artists.

We launched our callouts from May, and from the brief pitches, selected and commissioned the following:



Statement:

COVID-19: This is how my life has changed

What quarantine sounds like to me

COVID-19: Who's missing from the conversation?

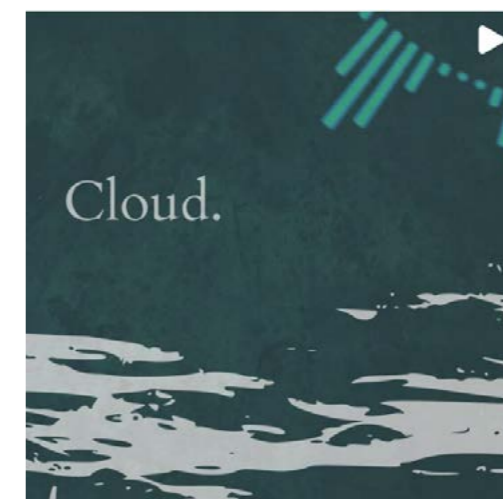
Response:

"The Abrupt Pause" by Sophie Cottle (poetry collection)

"Cloud" by Jake Gaule (soundscape)

"_____" by Kieran Morgan (poem)

"Long Covid" by Monique Jackson, (comic panels)



2020...

44 Offers of Support

Wellbeing Week Off & Declaration of Intent

After working through an ongoing pandemic, through the grief of loved ones falling ill, through the barrage of Black trauma, and amongst the throes of a sector desperate to be seen to be "doing more"... we needed a break. We needed to down tools and rest. So, on June 15th 2020 we collectively shut down Rising and... stopped. For a week. To rest.

And when we returned, we began to make adjustments: we stopped tracking hours on timesheets for those struggling to do 8-hour days from home (we just trusted everyone to get their work done); we introduced a home-working allowance to cover the use of home wifi, space, and utilities; we began to truly consider what it might look like to design a workplace that prized wellbeing above all else.



Black Lives Matter

That is a fact and it's not up for discussion. Our mission has always been to champion the unheard voices of creative young people and to fight for a fairer society.

When we put a call-out to our community to respond to the #WhoseFuture provocation, the lives and futures of black people came to the fore. We will not let fear of getting it wrong stand in the way of speaking out against systemic injustice against black people.

As long as Rising exists, we will use our platform to fight, amplify and advocate for the voices and lives of our black friends, family, peers and community members.

– *Euella Jackson, Engagement Producer*

OUR RESPONSE: #WhoseFuture

370+ posters & billboards

Through a partnership with Out of Hand and support from Bristol City Council the campaign enabled us to take over 9 billboards and 370+ posters around the city centre for a full month over the summer of 2020.

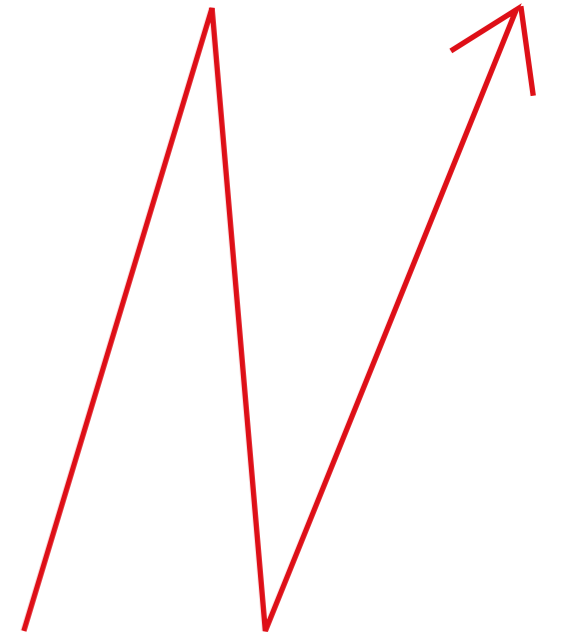


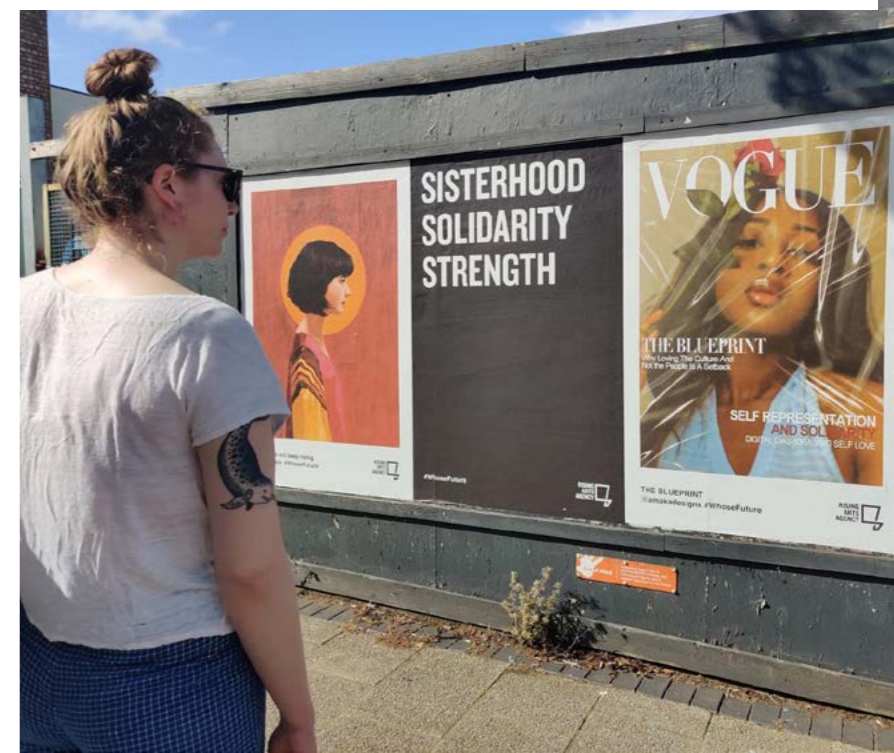
Our intention was to showcase young people's outstanding creative work while amplifying their voices through their thought-provoking and sometimes provocative content. #WhoseFuture gave them the space to address some of the specific issues we have been grappling with head on through our work, including racism, access issues, the climate crisis, transformative leadership and young people's hopes for a secure and empowering future.

"We weren't afraid of using the campaign as a vehicle for asking some difficult questions of the city."
– Kamina Walton, Founder

"I've always dreamt of making something like this happen. Curating #WhoseFuture was my first experience of putting something together on this scale. It was a deep dive in planning, designing, artist liaise-ing, and Zoom hosting. I learnt so much."

– Rosa ter Kuile, Campaign Manager





THE WORK: BE IT / COHORT 2

49 applicants

Creative Change-Maker Leadership Programme

Delivering a Leadership Programme in the context of 2020-21 offers opportunities for us (as facilitators) to interrogate the purpose of the creative sector and, crucially, who it serves. Actualising oneself as a leader can take a lifetime; and we are aware of the task at hand. Simultaneously communicating learning to ACE whilst also enabling the cohorts to curate their own development is a fragile balancing act, but one from which we've drawn rich insight about Bristol's creative community and ourselves.

Thanks to our constant evaluation and reflection, we have been able to immediately enact the first year's learning in Year 2. Anna Rathbone from Cohort 1 supported us to interrogate and improve the accessibility of our recruitment process to great success. We now have a second cohort of ten young leaders on the journey with us, and are devising further ways to embed Cohort 1 in Year 2's delivery (and beyond!).

"Doing this work is not easy. However, it has clarified some things for us: focusing solely on outcomes doesn't always honour the thinking and growth that happens along the way; moving at the speed of trust allows people to thrive authentically; and that ultimately, often, the process is the thing."

*Jess Bunyan,
Development Manager*



COMMISSIONS

Up £34K on the pervious year

My Library My Space

Following our successful **Re/Imagine** project we were approached by Junction 3 Library and the Bristol City Council's *Arts and Culture* team to return to Junction 3 for further in-depth exploration.

Arnolfini: Picture of Health

Workshops developed with creatives from Rising around themes of mental health and wellbeing to coincide with their exhibition

Bristol Beacon Rebrand

Three young creatives worked to reimagine and develop an inclusive visual brand for the Bristol Beacon (formerly Colston Hall) alongside London-based design agency Saboteur Studio.

National Trust

Consultancy around developing their new Children and Young People's strategy

I really learnt the value of co-creating. I have been so used to working independently, and one of the main reasons I wanted to be a part of this was for the opportunity to collaborate with other artists.
– Greg Keen,
Bristol Beacon Branding

SPACE

From Co-Working to WFH

As our team has grown, and the need for us to decamp from Founder/Director Kamina Walton's personal studio has become more pressing, we've been thinking a lot about space.



As we transitioned to working from home during the pandemic we opened up our horizons for more exploration of what space means to us.

When artist collective Centre of Gravity was given permission to host a festival in the old Gardiner Haskins building before it is ultimately developed, and they asked if we'd join them. After a few false starts and COVID readjustments we hosted a performance/conversation with young people from our community, asking: who is allowed space to create in Bristol? Using the 'Keynote Listener' model developed by Alisha at Migrants' Bureau, we invited various sector figures who have access to creative space to listen (and only listen) to the conversation as it unfolded.

By the end of the conversation, three key Bristol institutions had made offers of space—and a member of the public had offered a spare room for use as a studio!



THE FUTURE

Two New Co-Directors in 2021-22

It will come as a surprise to no-one that this year has been equal parts monumental and exhausting.

As the year went on, we continued to reflect on where we wanted to focus our energy, and subsequently secured funding for two essential fields:

Resourcing Racial Justice

To give us space and time to consider how we support our young creatives of colour and build on the legacy of WhoseCulture.

Co-Creating Change

Using the #WhoseCulture model to engage young d/Deaf, disabled, working class, and refugee creatives and ask them what they want and need from Rising and the sector.

Culture of Care

Not only is the world different now; we are different too. We need different structures and resources to fulfil our goals, or even to work at all. So, we're also centering a culture of care in all of our activity while we continue to work remotely.

The pandemic hasn't gone away, nor have the needs of our community, but—more than ever—we want to ensure that, as a team, we nourish ourselves so that we can continue to do this vital work.



SUPPORT US

& make change happen!

Join the Rising Alliance and support our work on the regular:

www.rising.org.uk/support-us

www.rising.org.uk
hello@rising.org.uk

For partnership, get in touch with jess@rising.org.uk

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GENUINELY YOUTH-LED

Team & Board
85% Under 30
77% Women
46% POC
23% LGBT+

Our Community
100% Under 30
59% Women
57% POC
12% LGBT+