

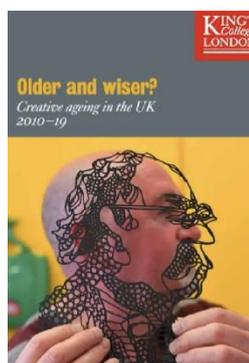
## Dr Virginia Tandy, Director, Creative Ageing Development Agency (CADA)

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DR VIRGINIA TANDY OBE is the director of CADA, the new Creative Ageing Development Agency, hosted by Manchester Museum and seed funded by the Baring Foundation. The former Director of Manchester City Galleries (1998-2008) and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council (2008-2011), she was President of the Museums Association (2006-2008) and a trustee of the Heritage Lottery Fund (2009-2015). A board member of National Museums Liverpool and the Granada Foundation, she currently chairs Brighter Sound, a NW creative music charity and is a member of the Fabric Committee for St Paul's Cathedral.

### 'Making the case for creative ageing.'

I am going to spend a few minutes talking about CADA, the relatively new creative ageing agency for England, what I have learned about the challenges of making the case for creative aging and offer some insights into the first project that we have embarked upon. What



#### CADA: the Creative Ageing Development Agency

- Legacy from Baring Foundation's 10 year investment in creative ageing (2009-2019)
- Consortium of Manchester Museum (Manchester Museums Partnership), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research into Ageing (MICRA)
- Resources: £250k seed funding over 3 years
- Born in Greater Manchester with a national remit

is CADA? The Creative Aging Development Agency is a national initiative across England, and across the full range of arts and heritage. It is hosted by Manchester Museum in collaboration with the Manchester Museum Partnership, and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and the Collaborative Research into Ageing (MICRA). CADA exists to champion the values of creativity, curiosity, and imagination later in life, to challenge ageism in the arts and heritage sectors, and to encourage new thinking and harness collective energy for change. We are a sector support organisation, a researcher, a partner, a connector, and a convener. As you can see, we are seed funded for three years, and we are the legacy of the Baring Foundations 10-year investment in creative ageing and participatory arts for older people. I was appointed as the part-time Director in March 2020.

So, what is creative aging? Some cultural organisations have been working with older people for decades, as Fergus just described. I think creative aging is a relatively new idea, as is the concept of Age Friendly Culture. It embraces so many strands of activity with a range of ultimate aims, issues of health and wellbeing as well as cultural democracy are woven into the ambitions, advocacy, and manifestations

of creative aging. Its objectives are diverse, and it is important to remember that the experiences, interests and circumstances of older people are as varied as any other age group. In my view creative aging is about the quality of all our futures, yours, and mine, not just those of other people who we consider to be older. Over the last 12 months I have become acutely aware that we are still adjusting to becoming an ageing society. Everyday ageism is pervasive, it permeates in every aspect of our lives, from birthday cards to the views of some of our most influential CEOs in the tech world.

There is still a lack of positive language about ageing, which demonstrates how little we explore and discuss it. Age is the only protected characteristic for which, other than children, there are no press standards to control prejudicial or pejorative language, and yet it is the only one where, if we all live long enough, we will all experience.

The post war generation changed that redefined 'teenage' are now challenging what it means to be older. In Manchester, the Older People's Network, frustrated by the views of older people during the pandemic, organised a photography competition, The Old Frame New Picture Gallery, to produce positive age friendly images of older people, to counter the negative stereotypes and recognise the diversity of aging, creating an image bank that everybody could use. The winning entry, *A Proud Man* by Darren Robinson.

While internationally, Chloé Zhao's Oscar winning film *Nomadland* offers a powerful narrative of later life, much of it voiced by older people, not actors. In her acceptance speech she said, 'How we treat our elders says a lot about our society, and we need to do better.' As we emerge from lockdown how will we do better? We are all asking big questions at the moment about how we want our post pandemic world to be.

We can no longer ignore the economic health and social inequalities the pandemic and Black Lives Matter has revealed in our society. In the past we have often referred to hard to reach audiences, but we now are beginning to realise that it can be the arts that are hard to reach. Social prescribing is offering new opportunities, particularly for those where there are no medical treatments. We know lack of access to creative activity frequently mirrors other inequalities. Even before the pandemic, more citizen lottery funded programmes across the country, such as Creative People and Places, Creative Civic Change and Celebrating Age were emerging. These have informed Arts Council England's new strategy, Lets Create, which aims to emphasise the value of creativity for everyone. Place based initiatives have proved to be some of the most important during the pandemic, recognising that even pre-Covid, many young and older people have very small physical universes. We are finally learning, as the Creative People and Places

evaluation discovered, *Mapping and analysis of engagement approaches across the Creative People and Places programme* (2018), if art pays attention to people, people pay attention to art.

As public spaces closed down, I watched with genuine admiration as specialist organisations transformed their practice. Much of the activity that had previously been characterised by togetherness in social groups, found their way of working disrupted by the pandemic. Whilst there has been a growth in the use of digital to conduct community workshops online, there has also been a rapid development of ingenious patient creative work, informed by a detailed knowledge of the locality, or of the needs of a particular group of people, using hybrid methods of communication, including post, phone and radio - building a different kind of shared space to bridge digital divide. Sometimes this work has been led by older people themselves, especially where staff have been furloughed. The Baring Foundation captured some of this innovation in its key worker report, *Key workers: creative ageing in lockdown and after* (2020).

The cover of this report illustrates the Singing Hinnies, an informal group of musicians organised by Equal Arts up in Newcastle, to perform to older people who were shielding in the Spring and Summer of 2020, playing in front gardens, streets, care homes and car parks. However, the findings of this report also highlight the range of concerns about the impact of the pandemic on arts organisations, freelancers, and the people they work with and for. Despite the roll out of vaccines, and the change in restrictions that we are now enjoying, many of those concerns still remain.

What is CADA's focus? As a small organisation of modest means, while we are scanning the horizon to keep informed of current developments, we are also pursuing a handful of priorities, mindful of the ever-changing environment. We are working to amplify the voice of older people in the creative ageing debate, highlighting activity generated by older people, rather than for them. Here is a quote from a Manchester Culture Champion's experience, demonstrating the benefits of this approach: 'It attracted people from different walks of life. I was chuffed to be asked to be a Culture Champion, it helps us find things to do as we get older. It gets ordinary folk involved, helped us to have a say.'

We also want to make creative work by and within minority communities more visible and we are about to commission a piece of work about creative ageing in South Asian communities. We are also building information resources and mapping where there has been arts investment in work by and for older people nationally across a range of agencies, to pinpoint the most age ambitious areas in England. We are encouraging more analysis of arts audience and participation data through an older person's lens and pulling together a range of models

of later life in relation to culture. We are connecting to research projects at universities across the country, building a community of practice amongst highly skilled creative ageing practitioners across England and further afield to share knowledge and skills, and we look forward to working with a range of partners to progress these lines of enquiry. All of these activities we hope will contribute to achieving the right to end one's days as creatively engaged citizen, which is CADA's ultimate aim. Thank you.

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