The Impact Of Using Social Media As An Artist

by Gabrielle de la Puente
About

This document surveys how and why artists use social media. It considers the ways in which social media can have an impact on an artist’s career today as a tool for work, networking, and creativity. The document also offers tips, examples, advice on safety and mental wellbeing, and guidance for institutions on working with artists through social media.

This report also examines how the recent Stigma commissions from Unlimited were shared online. There is an assessment of the delivery of these artworks that considers what best practice looks like when it comes to social media and online commissions.

This document was commissioned by Unlimited, an arts commissioning programme that enables new work by disabled artists to reach UK and international audiences. This report was written by Gabrielle de la Puente, a writer in Liverpool who co-runs The White Pube. She writes criticism on video games and art, and also runs a Successful Funding Application Library and a Working Class Writers Grant.

This text is written in Simple English but if you would like any clarification, please contact the writer or Unlimited.

Illustrations by Rebecca Hinton. Image descriptions are at the bottom of the document.
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Section 1: Introduction

Why Do Artists Use Social Media?

Many artists use social media channels for professional, creative and social reasons.

Before the Internet, artists would have studio visits from curators, gallerists, collectors, buyers, writers, and other artists who were interested in their work. This is how artists were able to get their artwork and their name out into the professional world. They used to also rely on visiting exhibition openings where lots of creative people gathered. Through these social connections, the artist would receive opportunities. Their artwork would go on to be shown in galleries. Through exhibitions and reviews of those shows, their artwork would be given cultural and financial value. They would then go on to show in other places around the country and even the world. This is how they would have a career — it always began in face to face social connections.

Now, because artists have access to the Internet, they can use social media as a substitute for the face to face connections of the past — connections made in settings such as studio visits and exhibition openings. For many artists, social media channels have become the first point of contact through which they share their work, their ideas, and who they are. Using social media, artists can meet and speak to curators, gallerists, collectors, buyers, writers and other artists, as well as their own audience and their fans. The more followers and engagement an artist has online, the more visible they will become within the art sector. The more visible they become, the more social connections will be made. Exhibitions, reviews, sales and other opportunities often follow. This is how many artists begin and maintain their careers today.
Professional

Some artists have a website of their own. They use their website to present an online portfolio, a CV of exhibitions and events, an ‘about me’ section, and contact details for further enquiries. However, more and more, artists are using social media channels to share this kind of content instead. This is for a number of reasons. A social media account is free whereas websites can be expensive due to the cost of domains, hosting, and web design. Plus, Internet users in general spend so much more time on social media compared to singular websites. Therefore it is more efficient to share work on social media where there is so much more traffic. It is where everybody else already is, and after all, social connections are very important for artists.

Many artists see their social media channels as an ongoing online portfolio of artwork. They share art that is new, old, and sometimes works in progress. By sharing their own artwork, artists are able to publicise themselves, build a following, and try to get their portfolios in front of people who might be able to support their career further. For example, a curator could see the work and include them in an exhibition. Plus, the curators that first find someone through social media will often reach out for in-person meetings such as a studio visit in order to carry on the conversation and build a connection. Further opportunities could come from other artists, and also writers, academics, collectors and fans.

Artists are also able to sell artworks directly to buyers via direct messaging. Sometimes, this is using in-built features that make transactions easier. Buying art through social media is a quick and casual alternative to what can otherwise involve very formal contracts, commission that goes to middlemen, or auctions reserved for only the most famous artists.

For a long time, social media has been seen as a very informal space and not somewhere to seek or offer work, but things have changed. Jobs are listed, open calls and competitions are shared. Artists are noticing a rise in how often curators and other professionals will reach out to them directly via social media as opposed to getting in touch with them via emails. Museums will even use social media to share artefacts from their collections, and art critics will share reviews directly on social media too. For the arts, it has become an important place for business and discussion — for some, it is where ‘the art world’ now exists.

Some artists receive invitations to work with galleries in a way that utilises social media itself. A popular way of doing this is for artists to do ‘takeovers.’ This involves the artist posting content on the gallery’s social media account, which will usually have a larger
following than the artist’s profile. This is a way for the artist to not only get to know the
gallery, but for the gallery’s audience to get to know them in return, and that can be a
useful way of growing a following as well as an artist’s prestige.

The nature of the Internet means connections can be made with other arts professionals
in an instant. Contact can be made from anybody, anywhere in the world, 24/7. Online,
the door is always open. This means, artists can build up a local and international
audience from the comfort of their home by sharing their work online. The networking
that leads to exhibition opportunities is no longer restricted simply by where an artist
lives. This means people who live outside of big cities with busy art scenes can use the
Internet to help them find success they might not have achieved otherwise. It also
means sick and disabled artists, and those who might find themselves spending large
amounts of time at home because of caring responsibilities, can be active members in
the art world. It is an exciting time for creatives to connect.

Connections can lead to collaboration. For some, a career as an individual artist can
feel lonely or a bit limiting because it is just one person on their own making work. When
two or more people work together, they can achieve great things that they would not
have been able to manage or even imagine on their own. When your social media
accounts are full of creatives, it is possible to find others to team up with. A dancer
might need some help documenting their work, and a videographer might be looking to
build their portfolio, and those two can help one another out. An artist might start
speaking to a whole group of people and find themselves coming up with totally new
ideas on a bigger scale than they are used to, inspired by the others around them. Plus,
conversations between users on opposite sides of the world can lead to long-lasting
professional relationships and great success — and this is between people who might
never have found one another without the Internet.

Social

Social media means artists can make and keep up relationships with people from all
over the world. Social connections can happen between artists and their audiences,
including fans and patrons, and it can also happen between artists themselves. People
can find accounts they want to follow by using search bars, looking through suggested
accounts to follow, or even checking through the likes, followers and following sections
of accounts they enjoy.

Artists might come to be mutuals with one another online based on location, identity,
politics, art style, art medium, certain subjects of interest, or they might just enjoy each
other’s commentary. When creatives come together on social media over shared
interests, whole communities can form. These communities can become an important place to socialise, learn, and create. Online communities sometimes run online events and in-person meet-ups. Meeting online can simply be a starting point for creative collaborations, long-lasting friendships, and working relationships.

Social media means you can follow along with what artists are making, doing and thinking. It also means others can follow along as you do the same. The mechanisms of social media can also be a very active way to support the artists you want to do well. Followers can do this by liking, commenting, sharing, and posting their thoughts about the art that has been shared. Others might do the same in return. All of this engagement can help support an artist’s work to become more visible and more discussed. This is because the more engagement a social media account receives, the higher it will appear on a feed, timeline or an explore page. This means that when someone picks up their phone or logs in on a desktop, it will be the popular accounts and the accounts the user engages with most that will show up at the top of their feed. All the support accumulates and the accounts with most engagement will become recommended to people who are not already following them, because the social media platform will see them as something others might like too.

In the past, face to face, support for artists might have been shown in a kind word, a handshake, or a recommendation you pass on to others. Now, social media captures all of this engagement and makes support visible. In the current art world, that visible engagement can count for a lot. For example, it can make a gallery want to work with an artist because the curators can be assured the artist has a strong audience who will come with them. Big audiences can help galleries sell tickets or secure more funding in the future, so it is understandable why they might programme popular artists. It is the case now that they find those artists through social media, so many artists are putting a lot of time and effort into making their accounts successful.

Another important aspect of social media’s social value is in its search functions. In a city or a town, it can be quite difficult to find people interested in the same things as you are. It might also be impossible for some artists to go out there and find like-minded people due to their sickness or disability getting in the way of them socialising in person. The search bars that come with social media platforms mean it is possible to find, follow, support and contact artists whose work you like. As long as your account is not set to private, this also means other people can find and support you too. New followers might find your account through the kinds of images you post, the words you share, your content being re-posted by others, or the items you tag and hashtag. All of these methods can be a way of putting people in touch with one another through their online content and their taste.
A lot of these interactions between artists through social media can make it sound like a very professional or competitive place. But online communities, new friendships, and good conversations through direct messages and comments can open up an artist’s social media account from simply an online portfolio and a workspace to a more lively, friendly, and creative place — just like the studio visits or exhibition openings of the past. Those things still happen, of course. But social media has made it feel like they are always happening in the virtual space and anybody from anywhere has an open invitation to attend.

**Creative**

Artists use social media platforms for professional opportunities, as a way to socialise with others, and also as a creative space for inspiration, display and conversation.

If you follow lots of people who work in the arts, your feed can become a mood board. You will see images of new art, studio shots, art in progress, exhibitions, and even the reference material that inspires creatives to make things such as books, articles, artefacts and important people and their ideas. This can in turn inspire others to think, create, and even riff on each other’s work. There is also a calendar of challenges to participate in through hashtags. For example, ‘Inktober’ in October or ‘Drawcember’ in December that both encourage people to post a new drawing once a day for a whole month.

Following many artists online is a shortcut to knowing what contemporary art looks like at the moment. This is useful for an audience but it is also helpful for other artists, especially for those at the start of their career. This is because getting a sense of what it is artists are making can be a beginning point to making artwork of your own. Trends in art mean different styles, subjects and mediums go in and out of style. And as politics and contemporary art discourse evolve, artwork does too. Artists often use their practice to think through complex ideas about the world, civilisation, and identity. In the past, to see the result of all this thinking, you would have had to visit lots of galleries all over the world, and to keep up you would have had to keep on visiting those galleries all of the time. Now, social media means everybody can discover contemporary art through the accounts of both artists and galleries. Plus, because artists often include some writing about their work, people can have help in understanding the meaning behind it too.

Artists can inspire each other and not just through their new artwork but through old artwork too. Artists post images and videos of lots of things they make, and also images from the exhibitions and events they take part in. This can build up into years of content. An artist's account is like an open archive that anybody can access. Before social
media, you would have had to visit an artist’s studio or even their storage to see everything they had ever made. You might have had to piece together their work like a detective, going through books, visiting galleries and museums, speaking to collectors, or going through files at a physical archive that sometimes require special permission. Now, we have social media as a way to lay everything out in one go. It is a privilege to see an artist’s practice as it happens, and it is inspiring to look back over everything that has happened so far.

Because this is social media, creativity can happen between people getting in touch with one another. Social media allows for comments, replies, quoting, video responses, voice notes, and direct messages. When an artist shares work online, they can also invite creative conversations around themselves. This might be feedback about the work itself, references for the artist to look into, suggestions on where this person’s practice might go next, or discussions about the subjects they touch on. Creativity might simply come from encouragement too.

As well as this, many artists find themselves making art with nowhere to show it. This is because exhibition opportunities can be difficult to secure. And so, people online will come together to share details about open calls, commissions, art fairs, markets, and other suggestions for display such as cafes who are looking for some art to hang up. While this is certainly a professional reason for artists to join social media, and a social reason to be a part of an online community, it is creative too because this kind of conversation often leads to new work. This might be from artists responding to briefs, but it can also happen when groups come together to put on exhibitions of their own.

Another way social media plays an important part in an artist’s creativity is in the process of display. Many artists feel that they need to display a piece of work in order to consider it complete. They feel that once it has been shown to others, they can box it off and move on to the next thing they are planning on making — or by showing it to others and having conversations with them, they might start to have ideas of what to do next. However, not everyone has a physical studio they can hang or install work in, or a timely exhibition opportunity to fulfil that need either. Instead, what many artists do now is photograph an artwork and post it online. This has become a part of the creative process. A bonus of posting online is that the artist can consider how the new work looks, feels or sounds alongside the rest of the work they have shared. Again, because many don’t have studios, it can be difficult to see all of their work in one place in order to consider how it all fits in, or how a body of work could look if it were to be exhibited together. Social media is a way for artists to see their own work through another lens.
Finally, an artist might make a painting, hang it on a wall, photograph it, and then post an image online. This uses social media as a display space. But there is a growing number of creators who make art that is specifically meant to exist on social media and not in a typical, physical exhibition. Social media has inspired artists to make work that responds to or intervenes with the platforms themselves — platforms that are so much a part of everyday life for the general population. Artists that make this kind of work often want their audience to experience the art on social media rather than in a gallery. Some even turn down physical exhibition invitations because they consider the platform to be a part of the work’s delivery. Examples of artistic responses to social media are included in the following chapters to demonstrate how this can play out on different websites and apps.

You may have noticed over the past decade a subtle change in the art people make as artists create things that will translate well as content for their social media posts. Paintings are square more often than they used to be because of Instagram. It's happening in music too, where pop songs are getting shorter and shorter so that they have a better chance of going viral within Tik Tok’s video time limits.
To recap, artists use social media to:

Share artwork
Share their biography
Share contact details
Share jobs and opportunities

Make themselves visible to the rest of the art world
Make themselves easy to contact by people in the arts

Find art from all over the world
Find inspiration
Find jobs and opportunities
Find an audience
Find a community
Find people to collaborate with
Find friends
Allow other people to find them

Sell art
Buy art

Participate in challenges

Decide what type of art they want to make

Support other artists
Allow other people to support them

Keep up with exhibitions and events
Keep up with an artist’s practice over time
Keep up with the art world at large
Keep track of their own artwork
Allow other people to keep up with them

Talk about art
Talk to other people about art

Respond creatively to social media itself
Section 2:
Tips For Artists Using Social Media

Because of the impact social media can have on an artist's career, it is helpful to know how best to use the platforms available. Each platform allows the user to do different things, and each is seen in a different way by the art world. Before we get to the specifics of each social media platform, there are a few tips up top that are generally applicable to all of them. It is important that an artist's own personality shines through and that might mean breaking or changing some of these 'rules.' These tips are only there to guide you while you make those decisions.

Setting Up An Account

First, it is best to use a screen name that is also your real name. This makes your account easiest to find. For example, a curator who wants to see what work you are currently making can simply search your name to arrive at your account. Or if somebody sees your work in an exhibition, they might want to keep up with your art practice online, but if you have a screen name that isn't your own name, they might never find you. Of course, many screen names are already taken so underscores and numbers can be helpful so you can get your own name. In the past, artists have added 'FA' at the end of their screen name to signify 'Fine Artist.' This is not recommended because professional artists would not really introduce themselves as a ‘fine artist’ (just as an ‘artist’) and so it can sound a little bit dated.

Social media allows users to upload a profile picture alongside their name. Again, as with the advice of the screen name, it is best to upload an image of yourself. A headshot with a plain background is ideal so you are recognisable even through a picture which might appear very small on somebody’s else’s screen.

A key piece of advice that applies to both the profile picture and the chosen screen name is to stick with them for as long as you can. When other people scroll through social media feeds, they often go very fast, reading through lots of text and looking at lots of images. If you stick with the same profile picture and screen name for a long period of time, followers will remember and recognise both. If you change either or both of them regularly, people might miss your content because they do not realise it is you posting. If you do want or need to change something, it is best to avoid changing both at the same time because then people will not have anything to go off and might not know
who this account is anymore — and some might never bother to check. It sounds dramatic but with the speed people scroll through social media, it really helps make sure you don’t disappear in the crowd.

If you sign up for accounts on different apps, it is a good idea to make your screen name and profile picture the same across all apps where possible. This helps in your discoverability, which is a key reason artists are on social media in the first place.

Most social media apps usually also allow space for a short bio alongside the screen name and profile picture. Artists usually share what they do and their location. Sometimes an artist will also share something important about their identity, or name projects they are a part of. The bio can be quick and informative but it can also be an opportunity to show some personality. For example, @bella.milroy’s bio on Instagram says ‘Artist, writer, gardener, patient advocate. Sometimes sits, sometimes stands, lies down lots, often smelly, always disabled. She/her’ and then there is a link to her website bellamilroy.com where she shares art, writing and audio recordings. Another example would be @RubennaArt on Twitter whose bio says, ‘Deaf Artist, Art Psychotherapist, Trainer - create art as a visual language and breaking down barriers to equality. Artist Interviews BBC, Channel 4 & BSLZone.’ This bio tells us what the artist cares about and it is useful to establish where else we might be able to see the artist at work.
**Link in Bio**

Some apps like Instagram do not allow users to post links in captions and comments, so when an artist wants to redirect their followers to a webpage, they will put the link in their bio and tell people to head there.

At the top of somebody’s profile, most social media platforms allow for a single link to be shared. Some artists will link to their own website where a full portfolio is on show. If an artist doesn’t have a website to share, on Twitter they might link to their Instagram account and vice versa. More recently, people have started to use link trees which are a landing page on which you can share multiple links. This is useful because most social media platforms only allow space for one link. So, an artist who has a link tree on Instagram might use it to share links to their website, their Twitter, an exhibition they have coming up soon, and maybe an online shop where they are selling work. If you have your own website, you can make one by adding a page for /links and putting everything on there. Alternatively, you can use a third-party app to build a landing page such as LinkTree, Hootsuite, Shorby, Pallyy, Tab.Bio, Lnk.Bio, ShortStack, Leadpages, Milkshake, Linkin.Bio.By.Later or Campsite. Most of these have free versions, some come with other tools packaged in, and some have paid versions that allow users more customisation.

**Pinned Posts**

Sometimes a bio on a social media account does not feel like enough room to give a proper introduction to who you are, what you care about, and what you do. Most social media platforms allow users to pin posts. This means the post, even if it was shared a long time ago, always stays at the top of your page. It will be one of the first things people visiting your social media page will see. On Twitter, this is a pinned tweet. On Instagram, it can be done using Highlights. It can be done in addition to the link in bio, or instead and in place of a link tree.

Pinned posts are also a good opportunity for sick and disabled artists to state some information. This might include guidance on how best to communicate with them. It could also include a note that they might not always be online to reply straight away, or they might reply at strange hours and the other person should feel free to reply in their own time. If a carer or personal assistant helps with the account, a pinned post can be a useful way to make that clear if the user wants that information to be known. These are just a few examples but it is a great way of expanding the information beyond the bio.
**Content Ideas**

Once you have an account set up, what exactly should you post? Artists might want to post on social media every day but they might not produce a new piece of art every day to share. There could be weeks, months or even years between finished artworks. Luckily, there are plenty of things artists can post that their followers might enjoy. This list is not exhaustive by any means, and artists come up with new ideas all the time. Plus, different platforms allow for different types of media such as images, videos or text. These are some jumping off points for content ideas:

**Artwork by you:**
- Documentation of art on its own, cropped
- Art hanging on a wall or on a plinth
- Art in an exhibition (sometimes with the artist or a visitor in the image to liven it up)
- Shots while an exhibition is getting installed
- Clips or stills of moving image, sound or performance
- Close-ups or details of one artwork
- Artwork from different angles
- Digital artwork made directly for social media
- Commissions — art made for other people or projects
- Artwork made as part of a timed artistic challenges such as Inktober or Sketchtember
- Work in progress
- Process shots (for example: pouring resin over a sculpture)
- Studio shots (sometimes with the artist in them)
- Exhibition posters of shows you are in
- Accidents and mistakes
- Random sketches
- Pages from sketchbooks
- Piles of sketchbooks
- Throwback posts looking at the artist's own work from the past
- Artwork for sale
- Other related merchandise you are selling such as stickers
- Tools the artist uses: paintbrushes, palettes, cameras, kilns
- Books, videos and other media the artist is featured in

**References:**
- Whatever the artist is thinking about at the moment — what they are reading, watching, listening to, playing, learning, doing, and so on
- Other artist's exhibitions (which also supports the other artists)
- Phrases from art theory
Sections from reviews
Residencies the artist is on
Research trips

**Random:**
Blogs
Vlogs
Artists at work doing artist talks, running workshops etc.
Interesting pictures from the artist’s life
Bits and bobs from the artist’s studio (even if that studio is a bedroom, a shed)
Artist campaigns and protests
Artist union information
Fundraisers
Artists socialising at events
Pictures of the artist (selfies, headshots)

**Making Content Look Good**

Most artists prioritise sharing art. That might be documentation of physical art or digital art made specifically for social media. Documenting work and sharing it can be difficult if the art has not been designed to exist on social media so there are a few tips to consider to make artwork look its best online.

**Images**

Make sure the lighting is good enough to make clear exactly what the artwork is. This sounds obvious but a harsh shadow can make it difficult to see what is going on, and people don’t tend to stick around to figure things out — they will just scroll by instead. If the image is too dark, consider editing the exposure or brightness to make it easier to read.

Clarity can also come from taking a good quality image. Most phone cameras can achieve this. There are a fair amount of artists who now also use digital cameras to photograph their work at a higher quality. They might also shoot in RAW in order to edit images afterwards without losing any detail. Also, artists who work in 2D such as drawing and collage might consider scanning their work rather than photographing it. Some scanners allow for higher resolution copies of artworks than handheld cameras, and clarity and brightness is guaranteed with a scanner.
It helps if an image has a central focus point. It might be tempting to post an image with lots of artwork in it in a busy setting, but a single image of a single artwork can allow followers to focus and appreciate each object. Or, if there is a busy background, making sure the scene is set up to focus on one particular thing can be helpful. If an artwork is multi-dimensional such as a sculpture, installation or performance, it can be good to share multiple posts over the course of a week or so to show the artwork from different angles. This way, people get a good sense of the work even if they cannot see it in person for themselves. Plus, it means the artist has more content to share overall.

Make sure that if there are any straight lines within an artwork or its framing that the image is taken straight on and it does not accidentally appear wonky. Even if a painting is hung correctly on a wall, it can be difficult to take an image of the painting that is also perfectly straight. But with editing software, artists can straighten the image before it is shared. This looks more professional and pleasing. Some apps, such as Instagram, have in-app editors that allow artists to change the angle of an image before it is posted. This is very handy for people who don’t have other editing software available, and it is also useful for busy artists who are posting on the go.

It is noticeable that images with people in them tend to get more engagement than images without. Of course, some artists will want to make their art front and centre and not themselves. Ways to work with this might be: holding an object such as a small sculpture or a book instead of just taking a picture of it flat on a table, or being photographed from behind looking at your work or sitting in the studio.

**Videos**

If you want to show videos on social media, it is important to check the time limits of each platform first. It is also useful to know the aspect ratios available to show in and the file types and maximum file sizes allowed. Each app is different and one in particular might best suit your needs.

Instagram currently prefers videos that are MP4, H.264 Codec. Their aspect ratio limits range from 1:1, 4:5 and 16:9, with 4GB as the maximum file size. Videos on Instagram can be up to one minute long in main posts. But the app’s IGTV allows users to upload videos up to 15 minutes via the app, and if you use the desktop upload option, you can share films that are up to one hour long. IGTV can be useful for sharing portrait and landscape videos, and Instagram main posts for showing videos that are square.

Twitter’s rules are different again, but they also recommend MP4, H.264 Codec video uploads. They allow videos up to 2 minutes 20 seconds long and the maximum file size
is 512MB. They also recommend aspect ratios of 16:9 and 1:1. Twitter users can also link to videos uploaded on other sites such as YouTube or Vimeo and content will play directly on the Twitter feed, which is a handy way to get around any of these limits.

Some artists prefer to not show full films on social media because they don’t feel like it is the right environment to experience their art work. Some explain that they prefer their audience to be in a setting where their film is the focus, and not in competition with lots of other content on a social media feed. In that case, check the Link in Bio section for help redirecting audiences to other places on the Internet, as well as to live events that might better suit the delivery of the work. An alternative to this is also to show stills from the film instead. The benefit for artists working in moving image is that a video can be broken down into lots of images, and therefore lots of content. Followers are much more likely to engage with a still image than a video. So, stills can both be a useful way to share imagery and ideas from the work, and also advertise the main piece to followers who will hopefully want to watch the full piece once they see what it is like.

**Soundwork**

If you make sound and want to share work on social media, the best option is generally to attach the audio to a video format. Even if a visual element is not a key part of the work, it would be worth thinking about a visual stand-in. That might mean a flat colour or one still image but it’s better than nothing, because people are not very likely to stick around for a plain black video. Sound work in general should not need visuals to accompany it, but in the setting of social media, it can help keep attention if there is something to look at too.
If the sound work remixes other existing tracks, such as songs, artists sharing sound on social media can run into some problems. Social media has in-built software to protect the copyright of musicians so some song usage will result in a copyright claim and with the audio/video being taken down.

**Text**

There are plenty of artists who write alongside their art practice. They might write a blog, essays, or text itself might be a part of their art work. If creating text is a significant part of an artist’s practice, they might want to look at the word limits allowed on different social media platforms. Instagram allows for captions of 2200 characters, spaces included. Twitter is only 280 characters but this might work well for some creators (see game developer @HTHRFLWRS for example). It is also an option to photograph or scan text and share it as an image instead, being careful to make sure the quality of the image is good enough that the text is readable and that alt text is also provided. It is also a good idea to split text up into multiple images if the text looks too compact in a single image to be clear and easy to read.

**Protecting Work Online**

It might seem harmless to upload images of your art to social media but unfortunately some people use social media to find other people’s work and ideas and take them for themselves. There are actually social media accounts dedicated to tracking this kind of behaviour, and it seems to particularly affect illustrators and graphic designers. For example, a big fashion brand might look to social media for new designs, copy something, and sell it on their clothing without ever crediting the original artist. It also seems to happen between artists themselves.

The very best way to avoid this is to avoid sharing work online at all. Social media platforms usually have a line in their Terms & Conditions that means in posting content to their site, you agree they can use your content in any way they see fit. They usually don’t take ownership away from the user, but this is still enough of a liability to make some people avoid sharing art online altogether.

Staying offline is often impossible for artists when sharing their art is often how people get work in the first place. So, there are a few things you can do if this is a concern to try to put people off copying you. Add a watermark on top of the image with your name or handle (you can do this for free through apps), only show sections or clips rather than the full work, upload low-resolution images. If your social media is being used to re-direct people to your portfolio on your website, you can also disable right-click so
people cannot save an image or download a video. It is also useful to make your contact info very visible as a way to invite people to get in touch with you for a commission or project, rather than just save your work without asking. But none of this is fool-proof, and the risk of having work stolen is just another reason some artists avoid social media completely.

**Making Social Media Posts Accessible**

When artists share their work through social media, it is important to make sure content is accessible. If artists do not bother to do this, they can exclude potential audience members from enjoying their work, and they can also exclude potential curators, writers, buyers and so on who could offer them further opportunities to progress in their career. Ways to make your social media posts accessible include:

1. Adding alt text to images that describes what the image is for people who use screen readers. Some screen readers have trouble with social media feeds and for that reason, many Instagram users double-up and put alt text in their captions too. Many artists also use this as a way to be creative and descriptive with their language, and to reflect on why they are sharing the image at all.
2. For video work, make sure there are subtitles. It is also helpful to put a description of the visuals in the caption too. This is useful because videos are usually set to autoplay without sound.
3. For videos, if there is flashing imagery, put a warning up front if possible or at the very beginning of the caption.
4. Descriptions are not just for images. Video descriptions help make content accessible too.
5. Make use of live-subtitling in apps where possible for live-streamed content.
6. When writing hashtags, capitalise the first letter of each word. This makes it easier for screen readers to read what is being said when words are put together without spaces.
7. Make sure that font size is big enough for people to read things clearly. This also goes for artists sharing documentation of text art or writing.
8. Consider how many @ or # are used in a text-post or caption because screen readers also read out punctuation. The same goes for emojis too!
9. Use plain text writing and avoid using special characters copied and pasted from font generators that show writing in a very stylised font. They are both difficult for some people to read and screen readers also can have a lot of trouble with them.
10. There is further guidance on presenting text in an accessible way here: [https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/design-readability](https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/design-readability)
Difficult content can trigger emotional upset in some people, so it is worthwhile adding content warnings or trigger warnings to posts that can help users decide if they want to see something or not. Apps like Twitter allow users to filter out key words so written warnings can help people avoid triggers altogether.

Queueing Posts

Posting content online can amount to a lot of work but there are schedulers that can help get that work done. A scheduler is a website and/or an app through which users can queue future posts. This means you can upload images, text, videos and captions, select a date and time you want it published, and then the scheduler will post it automatically on your behalf. This is a useful tool for artists for many reasons, and it can be an aid for sick and disabled artists in particular. It means days or weeks of content can be queued in moments when an artist is available to create the post, and also when they have the headspace, health and energy to put everything together. Then, content can continue to go out even in busy times, or when an artist is held back by brain fog, fatigue, and other illnesses. Most schedulers come with a desktop component which is great because not all social media platforms do, and it can be much easier for some people to organise their online content on a desktop instead of a phone.

Plus, scheduling allows artists to be strategic about when exactly they post, right down to the minute. Maybe an exhibition opens at 7pm so you also want to share the work online at 7pm so nobody misses out. You can't be in two places at once but a scheduler can help you out by publishing the online component while you are busy at the exhibition opening. Or an artist might want to post content for people to look at on their way to work in the morning, but they are unavailable at that time to post it themselves. So, they queue content to go out Monday to Friday at 8.30am. Their audience recognises the schedule and begins to look forward to checking their account every morning to see what is new. Peak times on the Internet change day to day and place to place, so it is worth googling what might be the peak time for your audience so you can capitalise on it. In-app insights can reveal this information.

If you want to use a scheduler, here are some to look at: Buffer, Hootsuite, Later, Sked Social, Combin Scheduler, Semrush, Tailwind, Onlypult. They have free versions and paid versions too that mostly allow for a higher number of posts to be queued across a higher number of accounts. It is worth checking which schedulers allow alt-text to be added to make sure you are sharing posts in an accessible and inclusive way.
Finding An Audience

Once you have your account set up and your content ready to go, how do you find followers to share your art with? This generally happens organically over time for people. They start by following a few friends or family members who follow them back. As they meet more people, they exchange social media details and their followers list becomes a list of who they know offline. A way to be more proactive about finding followers is to follow other artists in your community (that might be a community based on place, identity, or just art itself). Those people might see they have a new follower, check your profile to see who you are, enjoy the art they see and then choose to follow you back. This is why it is helpful to have details in your bio that quickly introduce you to new people. A step beyond this is to follow people who you guess might enjoy your work based on the things they post. Of course, it is only advisable to follow people whose content you also enjoy looking at because then your feed can become an enjoyable and inspiring place for you in the process.

Artists often note that they gain more followers after being involved with other projects, collaborations, residencies, and takeovers. For example, an artist who is invited to talk about their practice at a university will likely notice an uptick in followers from the students who listened to their lecture. If a gallery posts an image and tags an artist they are working with, some of the gallery’s followers will probably follow the artist too. Some arts organisations and companies will invite an artist to do a social media takeover of their account and this can also bring new followers to the artist’s page.

Some artists also try to gain followers by doing giveaways and competitions. Say an artist has some prints of their work, they might post that they are giving prints away but to be included in the competition you must follow their page, like their picture and tag a friend. Then, based on everyone who likes, comments and follows, they will use a randomiser to pick a winner who gets a print for free. The interesting part of this tactic is that by tagging a friend, the friend might also enjoy your work and do the same — not just to be a part of the competition, but to follow and keep up with your future work.
Sponsored Posts

Sponsoring posts means paying social media platforms to make your account more visible to more people in a given area. Users can be very specific with who they want to see their account — for example, 25-30 year olds within a 10 mile radius who enjoy artistic content. Users can specify the number of people they want to share their account with, and pay per that amount and per day. While this sounds like a useful aspect of social media, artists generally do not sponsor their own social media posts. This is for a number of reasons.

First, it can be expensive. Second, some artists prefer to organically build an audience of people within a specific community so that their experience of being in the arts feels more personal. On top of this, artists do not generally report finding sponsored posts to be worth it. A survey ran via The White Pube Instagram stories learnt that of 105 artists who had tried sponsoring their posts, only 14 believed it to be worth it. 91 artists reported they did not notice any change in their follower number or engagement. Of those 14 artists who believed it to be worth it, 10 of them were sponsoring specific projects attached to larger organisations, and not just their own general artistic practice. This might indicate that people being shown the sponsored post paid more attention to it when there was a bigger name involved, and this is also maybe because it was marketing a specific project that they believed they could participate in.

Deciding Which Social Media To Join

If you are an artist who wants to sign up to social media, which platform should you choose? Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Facebook, TikTok, Discord, or something else entirely? Maybe two, three or all of them at once? Below, each app is described in terms of what artists can use it for, and there is also mention of its usual relation to the art industry.

Instagram

What you can do on the app:

You can post images, videos, and you can also live stream through the app. There is an editor built into Instagram so users can edit the look of the content they post, as well as the length and aspect ratio of videos. This is useful, for example, for artists to quickly
straighten a wonky image or up the brightness of a painting they have just taken so that it looks professional online.

It has generous space for captions at 2200 characters including spaces, which is useful for artists who enjoy writing. Alt-text can be added to images. There is also an auto-captioning feature for videos as well as the possibility to add text on top of media yourself.

Anything posted on the main feed also comes with an optional comment section below which can be handy for conversation, questions, tagging other people to bring posts to their attention, and receiving feedback. Plus, stories have a Q&A function, polls, and sliding votes.

**What you can’t do on the app:**

There is no in-app re-sharing feature for main posts, unlike other apps such as Twitter. For a long time, users were unable to share links on stories unless they had a business account with over 10K followers. This has recently changed but it is a feature a lot of people don’t yet realise they have access to. It is still true though that links cannot be shared in comments or captions, or directly from main posts unless linked as adverts or products for purchase.

**The app and the art world:**

It appears to be the social media app of choice amongst the contemporary art world, with artists and galleries alike running active accounts. Galleries use it to market what’s on, and many smaller galleries use *only* Instagram to publicise details of their events and exhibitions. Curators often use it to contact artists in direct messages, especially as many artists don’t have their own websites where their email and other contact details would typically be.

**Tips:**

Instagram’s algorithm can make it a challenge to get your work seen. Users who make the most of all the apps features on a regular basis are rewarded with higher engagement. But this can be a lot of work as it means using main posts, stories, reels, IGTV and posts of things to buy using Instagram’s shop feature. By checking the in-app insights, users can view the peak times for their followers and post at that time to increase the likelihood their posts are seen. The algorithm changes over time as more features are added to the app.
Examples:
@jerronherman
@midgittebardot
@ablezine
@ramenate
@itsyosquared
@thesteveway
@mohammad.barrangi
@jessedarling
@artbyfunmi
@invalid__art
@akissi_nzambi
@heartnsoulart
@crip_fantasy
@bedroom_activist
Twitter

What you can do on the app:

Twitter is text-first, allowing text posts that fit within 280 characters. Twitter users can also post images, gifs, videos, and live stream through the app. Video length is limited to 2 minutes 20 seconds, unless a user has been granted special permission to post videos up to 10 minutes long — otherwise, linked videos play in-app fine too. Alt-text can be added to images. Unlike Instagram, anybody can post links. This can be useful for individual creatives and galleries that have a fuller website they want to direct others to. Twitter is also great for sharing other people’s posts in retweets, which is a smoother way of sharing content than many other apps offer. It can do polls of up to 4 items too. Twitter has also recently relaunched Spaces, an in-app feature for live audio conversations.

What you can’t do on the app:

Images are cropped on the timeline until a user clicks on them to see the full image. Twitter chooses where to focus the crop which can sometimes result in the least interesting part of an image being shown, and for artists this can be an issue for both presentation and engagement. There are also limits on how many images you can include in one tweet (it is currently 4, whereas Instagram allows carousels of 10 images). Twitter Spaces does offer live captioning, however, ‘Captions only appear on-screen when a person is looking at a live Space. We do not show captions to a person if they have docked the Space to the bottom of their Twitter app or are off the app (although the audio will continue to play)’ (via Twitter).

The app and the art world:

Twitter is very popular with artists but not necessarily for sharing art. There appear to be three general approaches to Twitter by artists:

1. The majority of artists keep their Twitter for casual, creative and social conversations more than sharing artwork. They might also discuss the art industry and share links for jobs.
2. Some artists do share artwork on Twitter directly but it is mostly digital artwork, and particularly illustrations, pixel art and anime. These artists also receive commissions directly from their followers, negotiated in direct messages, for casual illustrations such as personalised profile pictures.
3. A very small number share text-based art projects that use the tweet format itself to deliver their work. This is both a creative response to Twitter and an opportunity to share text art on a busy social media feed in a way that cannot be achieved in the same way on other apps.

**Tips:**

It is great if artists pin a tweet to the top of their profile that includes any key information that won’t already fit in their bio, such as places to find their work, other social media accounts, or projects on twitter they are attached to that can be directly @d.

People use hashtags as a way to label content and make it discoverable for others. Twitter’s search function is very thorough, however, so it is not advisable to hashtag too much when the search bar can find it anyway. It is noticeable that some people overuse hashtags, particularly those who are not digital natives. Some arts professionals are in the habit of hash-tagging multiple words within a single sentence, thinking others will be able to find their thoughts on the subject — but people will be able to find them anyway, even without the hashtags so it just makes a tweet look clunky.

**Examples:**

@RubbenaArt
@jamierzale
@CHRIS_SAMUEL_
@kaisyngtan
@disabilityarts
@messijessijumps
@mikscarlet
@CRIPticArts
@funmiccreates
@radicalbodyarts

**Twitter accounts using the platform in a performative way:**

@InhalingMy
@magicrealismbot
@choochoobot
@paulkneale
@hydrothemerald
@sosadtoday
@empathydeck
Facebook

What you can do on the app:

Facebook has a lot more features than most social media platforms. Users can post text, images, videos, and livestreams. The video limit is huge at 240 minutes and 4GB.

Facebook users can create public or private groups. These are very helpful for artists who want a space online where they can hang out with a group of people or discuss things behind closed doors or in public. It is like creating a forum, and people can be elected moderators to help out which is useful if groups get very big. Facebook also allows users to create public or private events as well. For artists, this is an efficient way to invite lots of people to an upcoming exhibition or workshop, etc.

Facebook allows a user to have friends and followers for their content. This means when posting something, the user can decide who exactly can see the post. Most social media platforms are all or nothing with their privacy settings, and because of that artists
often have a public art account and a private account for friends and family. Facebook means everything can happen in the same place.

The platform also has a very active Marketplace where users can sell things, which some artists use to sell artwork. It has an in-built fundraising feature too.

**What you can’t do on the app:**

The tricky thing about trying to operate efficiently as an artist online is that the best approach is to put all key art and information up front so that people can see your overall practice in an instant. Facebook has a tonne of features, such as photo albums that mean you can organise images by projects for example, but they are not there on the surface. Visitors to your page have to click through to ‘photos’ and then to a specific album to find what they are looking for. While this might not sound like too much of a hurdle, it can increase the drop off rate from your page. The drop off rate refers to how many people abandon what they are doing on a website, and it generally doesn’t take long for people to give up and do something else instead. Compare this to an artist’s portfolio on Instagram where everything is right there on the surface, and it can come off as a bit of a hassle.

**The app and the art world:**

Facebook used to be very popular with the contemporary art crowd but people have mostly moved over to Instagram and Twitter now. Facebook is seen as a little old-fashioned compared to the others, even though it offers so many features that are useful for an artist’s practice. It is also seen as a little bit more of a personal place compared to the others. Because of that, curators are less likely to reach out to artists via their Facebook pages, because they might feel inappropriate sending a friend request to access what is a personal and private space online. If Facebook had introduced the friends and followers options for privacy sooner, this might have turned out differently.

**Tips:**

Make use of the privacy settings so other Facebook users can follow your page, rather than sending a friend request. If you use photo albums to share artworks and projects, make sure they are labelled clearly and remember to post the albums on your news feed so that people who follow you know the work is there to look through whenever they want.
Tiktok

What you can do on the app:

TikTok is an app for short-form video content. It began with clips up to 15 seconds, but it has a new limit of 3 minutes. Where Instagram is useful for its photo editing capabilities, TikTok is known for its video editor. There is a library full of sounds, effects and filters to use for free. The music capabilities set it apart from other apps, as social media sites usually delete posts that use known music for copyright infringement whereas TikTok encourages it. Some artists use other people’s songs in their work and this means TikTok can be a good option for presenting that.

A popular TikTok feature is the duet, which means a user can take somebody else’s video and make one of their own to be played alongside it at the same time. This can be a really creative way to react to the work of other content creators.

Users with at least 10,000 followers and 100,000 views in the last 30 days are eligible to join TikTok’s Creator Fund which earns the user money based on views, engagement, and type of content (ie. it must fall within Community Guidelines and TikTok’s Terms of Service).

What you can’t do on the app:

You can’t post still images or text posts, and the caption length has a tight limit of 100 characters. You cannot add alt-text on TikTok at all, although it has introduced text-to-speech. Because of this, some users will post a video description in a comment instead but it is very rare unfortunately.

The app and the art world:

The art world currently seems to have two main opinions on TikTok. First, that it is for young people, and so most people don’t bother to take it seriously. And second, that it is for major art museums who want to bring some lightness to their online presence by using their art collections to participate in memes and trends. The app is not exactly new but it still feels like the art world is making its mind up about it, or learning how to embrace what it can offer. Some hobbyists have quit their jobs to pursue their full time TikTok art-related accounts, earning income from the app itself and its Creator Fund. Because of the difficulty artists can have finding work and making money, it is an option
some people should consider if their work can translate well to this particular social media platform.

**Tips:**
The nature of TikTok, its sound library, and the duet format means it is totally normal to react to other people’s content and try it out for yourself. This isn’t really the case for other social media platforms. Trying out a trend or a meme for yourself is a great way to make content if you are struggling to come up with your own ideas. If you use a popular sound, it also means your video will show up when other people are looking at what has been made with the sound, which can increase your visibility and engagement.

The art-related content on TikTok that seems to stay popular consistently is process videos. This means an artist has filmed themselves making an artwork — for example, close-ups of a paintbrush moving along a canvas, screen printing, or stitching. These videos are often filmed with relaxing music and people enjoy them because they are satisfying and calming. If you are thinking of starting a TikTok as an artist, a process video would probably be a good place to start.

**Examples:**
@tabithawhitley_art
@vamuseum
@egor_or_not
@drive45music
@dfreske
@memorylikealight
@museumofneonart

**Discord**

**What you can do on the app:**

Discord is made up of different servers created by its users. In those servers, people can chat using text messaging, voice and video calls. They can send media and files to one another too. Custom emojis can be added, moderators elected, and roles assigned to different people on the server. You can organise chats within a server by category and channels, and those channels can be text channels or voice channels depending on what they’re used for. The structure of channels means information can be really well organised, so lots of different conversations can happen at once in the same place.
Plus, a single user can join 100 different servers, and private messaging is possible. The voice chat function filters out background noise and can be a very useful way to hop in and out of conversations with other people online. Other social media platforms decide all the privacy and security settings, but with Discord you can decide your own if you are the moderator.

**What you can’t do on the app:**

The file size is only 8MB which can sometimes mean a single image is too big to send. However, there is a paid option that allows for higher size files to be sent (up to 50MB). This can make it tricky for artist communities who might be sharing their own images of artwork with each other. There are image hosting websites such as imgur that get around this problem, however.

While there is a server directory on Discord’s site, it currently only shows 2040 public servers in the Art category that you can request to join. There are thousands more but they won’t show up in the directory because most servers are private communities. It can be difficult to even find out they exist.

**The app and the art world:**

Discord is a less public approach to social media than other platforms. Because of that it might not seem like an obvious one to mention in terms of the impact of social media on artists. Plus, it is known for being used by gamers. But there are both huge and small artistic communities across Discord that are used by artists for socialising, network, and creativity too. Some servers are set up by specific groups, such as character design artists, to help critique one another’s work and to also share tips and tools, and connect internationally.

**Tips:**

If you are interested in joining a Discord server, it is worth asking people in your local arts community if there is one already set up. This might mean asking followers on other social media platforms to find out if there is a relevant one for you to join. But if you can’t quite find one, it is a simple process to set one up for yourself. Plus, that way you get to decide who joins it, what it is for, and how the channels are organised. You might want a server for a really specific reason and making your own is a way of fulfilling that. For example, you might want to speak to sculptors, collage artists, find work in your city, or connect with local artists.
Examples:
Corn on the Khobs
Arts & Commission Community
Easel Alley
SECTION 3: STAYING OFFLINE

“In a world that entices us to browse through the lives of others to help us better determine how we feel about ourselves and to in turn feel the need to be constantly visible – for visibility, these days, seems to somehow equate to success – do not be afraid to disappear. From it, from us, for a while, and see what comes to you in the silence.” Michaela Cole, 2021

It is worth considering why plenty of artists do not sign up to social media.

In Section 1, we looked at the professional, social, and creative reasons artists have accounts online. The main benefit for artists is that by sharing their work on the Internet, they can show it to people who might be able to give them further support and opportunities throughout their career. Most curators now look to platforms such as Instagram to find the artworks they want to put in exhibitions. In the past, artists could just focus on making art, and the curators would do the work of finding them in their studios, art schools, or at exhibition openings and so on.

Nowadays, artists are expected to make themselves visible through an online presence. Because of this, artists can struggle. They can be critical of the fact they do not want to spend so much time having to publicise themselves when their job should be to focus on creating new artworks. Artists feel pulled in many directions by social media. A successful artist account often requires them to document their work well, share it, find an audience, keep in contact with people, and post regular content in order for an account to stay up to date. This is all in the hope that an interested curator will see it. It can be overwhelming to expect artists to keep on top of all of these tasks, often tasks they were never trained to do. It would be helpful if curators, who often have the stability of a full-time job, found ways to take this responsibility back from the artists so they could get on with their creative work.

It is especially important for curators and other arts professionals who are in positions of power to do a lot of research to find new artists because not everyone is active online. Artists might not use social media because they do not have a phone, computer, internet access or maybe a camera to document their work with. They might not be able to afford these things or they might simply choose not to have them. Other artists are not able to have a public presence online because of safety. They might be completely
offline or have only private profiles in order to keep them safe from known people who may do them harm or online trolls.

Other artists believe their artwork is not suitable for social media. This could be due to the form of the artwork. For example, large multi-media installations that are very spatial, interactive works, sculptures that should be viewed from all angles, or long performances that do not fit within video upload limits. It can be difficult to see the point in signing up to social media accounts if the style or form of your work does not translate well to digital space. And of course, some artists believe their artwork simply does not suit the atmosphere of social media and think it should be best viewed one-on-one in person and not through a screen.

These are practical reasons why artists might not have any social media presence but there are also some issues related to the platforms themselves. You might hear people discuss ‘the algorithm.’ They are referring to the way social media platforms decide whose account is seen at the top of the feed most often and for whom. It is a way of ranking users and also a way of matching users to an audience they think will like the content posted. The way the platforms make these decisions changes all the time based on different factors but they are factors never made clear to users. People try to figure these things out for themselves so they can try to keep their account relevant. But again, when artists have so many other responsibilities, figuring out the secrets of the Internet can feel a step too far. For an artist, it can feel unfair knowing they are posting art but not many people might see it because they might not be posting in the right way according to the current rules of ‘the algorithm.’ Because of that, some might not even bother and prefer to keep their art offline instead.

Internet users have also noticed that social media can unfairly discriminate against people based on their identities, bodies, politics or jobs. For example, a disabled person who posts images or videos of themselves and tags content with disability-related words might find they have low engagement compared to non-disabled users. This might also happen to users who are LGBTQI+, fat, activists, or users who do sex work.

This is relevant to a discussion on artists and social media because many people in these communities are also artists, and social media can hold them back. Issues might include: curbed reach of their content, censorship, deleted posts, and shadow banning. In the past, social media platforms have justified these actions as safety measures for accounts they believe face risks of bullying and harassment. Therefore, they limit the reach of the account to avoid this from happening. However, this is highly contentious as it means many people from marginalised identities are treated differently online from others. It can show the political standing of the platform too. Therefore, many artists
avoid social media because they feel they cannot truly express themselves in the way they want to. They also do not want to risk building up a profile only and social connections only to lose all of their content because the social media platform decided their account ‘violated’ its rules — rules that are often kept vague and are hard to contest.
Mental Health: 
Attention, Pressure And Competition

There is a very high number of artists currently using social media. Artists share work, connect with others, and try to find success in the art world by building a strong online presence. Because of the scale of the Internet, and the rate at which people post, the whole place can feel like a competition for attention. This can be very overwhelming and it's easy to get sucked in, spending many hours looking at other people’s accounts and worrying about how your own compares. While it can be very inspiring and enjoyable to look at other artists online, it can take a toll on mental health and self-worth. Artists should be careful to not compare themselves to others. If you find yourself doing this, try to focus on your own artwork instead. Many artists prefer to focus on making work, finding this significantly more rewarding than engaging with social media.

If looking at other people’s success is troubling, don’t forget you can always unfollow the accounts that bring up these feelings. You can also follow them again when you are ready. Alternatively, you can mute or hide posts by somebody you do follow and then un-mute them if following and unfollowing could cause issues with relationships or difficult conversations. Artists and users in general should feel empowered to make their feed exactly how they want it to be. Do not feel pressure to follow people especially if following certain accounts makes you feel bad in some way. It is your online experience to decide, and it is great when you can make that a pleasant, friendly and inspiring time.

It can be upsetting to post artwork and then not receive many (or any) likes or comments. Most people have public social media accounts which means anybody can see their content and therefore people can see low engagement too. This can leave some people feeling embarrassed. Some will take that to mean nobody likes their art or even them as a person, even if that is not true. There are a number of reasons low engagement can happen but whatever the reason, it is important to remember the following: you should never value yourself based on how many likes you get online. You should value yourself for you. If you believe in your artwork then that should be enough to want to share it with the world.

Maybe most of the people who follow you didn’t see it because of algorithms, or because they follow lots of accounts and your post got lost in the mix. Maybe the people who follow you didn’t quite like this particular post, but you shouldn’t let that discourage you if you are proud of what you have made. Plus, by sharing content online, you might attract new followers who like whatever it was you posted. Be optimistic and be kind to yourself. However, if these are factors you do not feel you can handle, some social media platforms allow you to hide the number of likes from showing publicly. You could
also get into the habit of posting without checking how many likes a post receives, so it is something you don’t have to think about. This can be made easier if you post through third-party apps such as Hootsuite, Later, Buffer, Tweetdeck, because you are less likely to hang around on a social media account to see any engagement roll in.

These third-party apps that allow users to queue posts can also be a useful tool if you want to post things regularly, or at certain times of the day, but find that stressful. Social media seems to favour and recommend accounts that post lots of content frequently but it is worth mentioning that there are plenty of popular artist accounts online by people who post whenever they feel like it. That might be once every other month or even longer. Also, lots of creatives take long breaks away from the Internet when they are feeling burnt out. They sometimes also take breaks when social media does not feel like it is adding anything to their lives right now, but maybe acting as more of a distraction. It is fine to take yourself away for as long as you need to, and it is good to remember that you can do this at any point in time.

If there are certain words or conversations you do not want to see or think about while you’re online — some that may be triggering — apps like Twitter allow users to mute specific words in order to filter them from your view.

There are some things all users should bear in mind to make sure they protect their mental health online. This is advice for anybody, not just artists. For example, sometimes people online can be hateful, especially when they are speaking from anonymous accounts. If you receive any hate, it is effective to not engage in any way and to quickly block the account in question. It is effective to not reply at all because even just one reply can encourage trolls to send more and more abuse. Some social media accounts now offer an option to not only block the account but any new accounts that might be made by that user, which can bring peace of mind.

It is also an option to turn an account private, or change security and privacy settings so that you get to decide who sees what, who can get in touch, and who can engage with your content. Going private does not have to be a permanent thing, and it can be useful if you want a break away from total visibility which can feel draining.

There can also be dangerous people online so if you feel like you could be a target, be careful not to reveal information that means people can find you offline without your permission. For artists, it might be exciting to post in real time about an exhibition you are visiting, and tag your location too. But it would be safer to post about the art you have seen once you have left the gallery.
Many artistic communities are now setting up servers on Discord instead of the more mainstream social media sites such as Instagram and Twitter. It is an instant messaging platform that allows for text messages, voice and video calls, plus media and file sharing. Each server is a private chat with channels for different conversations and topics. Artistic communities are finding homes there because it is better set up for group conversations, and it is invite-only so artists can share thoughts and artwork without judgement from the public. Plus, Discord allows users to do their own moderation so many find it a safer and smaller online experience. It is like a custom social media platform for different groups of people, and for some it is the best fit for their mental wellbeing.

Social media can be a great place for artists that can bring with it new people, ideas and opportunities. However, for many, the Internet can be a challenging place full of comparisons, competition, hateful comments, and safety concerns. It is only one tool at an artist’s disposal, and it is not essential. If it does not feel right for you, safe, healthy, or fun, then you should prioritise your wellbeing and stay away. The important thing is that artists do not let social media take up too much headspace and they continue to focus on their art, which should be at the heart of everything they do.
Section 4:
Profiling v buckenham

Section 4 and 5 of this report include interviews with 2 artists who use social media in creative ways. The first interview with v buckenham demonstrates how artists can think about social media platforms themselves as tools to work with and to challenge.

v buckenham is a generative artist and creative technologist. They make creative tools to enable anyone to do new and interesting things with technology - such as Cheap Bots, Done Quick!, a platform for making Twitterbots that hosts over 20,000 bots. They have a background in videogames, and have worked on the award-winning games
Beasts of Balance, Mutazione and Panoramical. They also work as a curator, and were one of the founders of the Somerset House hosted festival of play Now Play This.

You can find v buckenham on Twitter @v21, and on Instagram @vtwentyone.

1. Can you tell me about the art you make and the concerns of your practice in general?

I'm going to copy & paste the artist's statement I wrote a while back, because I spent a bunch of time on it and it obviously expresses this better than I would do without spending quite so much time. Here it is:

I'm still motivated by the same joy that I felt as a child when I would write
10 PRINT FARTS
20 GOTO 10
and the screen would fill with FARTS. It's a short command leading to much larger results. It's a kind of joke, taking a simple premise and extrapolating from it to the absurd. Like custard that goes beep when you punch it.

I multiply these simple elements together to form intricate possibility spaces. Shaping not a particular plotter drawing, concrete poem, tweet or visual, but the shape of all possible outputs. I love making that shape wider and wilder, layering in more details to be discovered. It's a process of discovery as much as it is creation. I make the work to learn if it can be made, and discover what it'll feel like when it does exist. Sometimes this means I have to work quickly: I have to accumulate complexity faster than I can get tired of it.

But I'm not just interested in creating a complex system in the abstract - I care just as much how it is experienced. So sometimes the work takes the form of a tool or a toy, handing the controls over to a player so that they can discover things for themself. And sometimes the work is the samples I select from the system, pulling out a stretch of text or an image to be plotted that can illuminate the system.

As I guide the player or viewer through understanding the system, they construct a shadow version of it in their head. It's that internal model that I ultimately care about. I want to put off easy understanding of the system, to prolong the experience of putting together how it works - dripping out details and complications slowly, taking advantage of happy coincidences, allowing the ugly if it allows a wilder beauty.
2. How do you use social media as a part of your practice as an artist? And can you tell me about the Twitter bots.

So I became very interested in Twitterbots a few years ago, when there was a real surge of activity in them, and a real creative community forming around them. I would call out Everest Pipkin, Allison Parrish & Darius Kazemi as doing especially interesting things in this space. I had always been interested in generative art (see Panoramical) and working with possibility spaces, and I had always been interested in finding new and strange ways to express stuff - new ways to make work within a new social context. So Twitterbots were immediately exciting to me.

The bots I am best known for are Soft Landscapes and Many Gradients, both of which post abstract images exploring the aesthetic space that can be achieved with gradients on a fixed schedule. Soft Landscapes evolved out of Many Gradients - folding the gradients back on themselves and layering them, cutting shapes out to create the sense of mountain ranges fading away into the fog. They both deliberately generate "ugly" images - I am interested in shaping the possibility space as a whole, leaving space for surprising and unlikely things in there, rather than making every single output as pretty as it can be - I think this also comes from my background in games, trying to play with expectations as much as create a single aesthetically pleasing image. Both of these also have other iterations outside of Twitter (Calming Sphere in the case of Many Gradients, which extends it out into 3 dimensions and animates it, trying to create, as the title says, a calming presence). There are also other bots, which can be viewed as a whole here: https://twitter.com/i/lists/838442982940504064/members

I'm also just reasonably popular on Twitter generally, and feel like a lot of my exposure as an artist (and as a technologist & game designer) comes from that. And outside of that, I post other work on Instagram, although I have not built up much of a following there.

3. Can you tell me about Cheap Bots, Done Quick! too, and why have you made a tool for others to make bots?

Cheap Bots, Done Quick! is an accessible tool for making Twitterbots. It's free to use, and attempts to be accessible to people without much technical expertise. It hosts over 20,000 bots, with new ones being added daily. It's built around Kate Compton's procedural generation language Tracery.

So the slightly mythical version of this story goes like this: at the time I was involved in a community of creative coders who were doing really interesting things on Twitter with
automated accounts. And one of the leaders of that community, Darius Kazemi gave an interview where he said that it was a necessary thing that to make interesting twitterbots you had to be a coder - that there was something to the procedural and systemic nature of the form that was only accessible to coders. And I saw that and thought - no, you're wrong, it's more about poetry than it is about code, it's just that actually getting something set up, dealing with authentication on Twitter and setting up a server and all the other bullshit things you need to do to make a Twitterbot work on a practical level - all those things eliminate anyone who isn't a coder. And then I thought... and I could automate those things away. So then I did. And I think the outcome has shown I won the argument, hah. (I should stress that Darius is generally very encouraging of broadening access to creative spaces, and when I mentioned this story more recently, didn't remember making that comment)

And there's also other versions of the story - I kept seeing Kate Compton's Tracery system for generating procedural text, and I thought it was very exciting in how accessible it was, and how powerful - but also no one else seemed very excited by it. The argument I think I heard was: anyone interested in procedural generation is also a coder and is capable of making their own ad-hoc version of it whenever they want to do it, so why bother including it in your code? But that obviously meant it was an excellent match in terms of being the way to actually author bots within CBDQ.

4. What is your approach for your main Twitter account @v21?

I have a large follower count, which I put down to being active and engaging on Twitter for many years, rather than a brilliant execution of any systematic approach. I generally find writing long form text to be a painful process, but I like having ideas and thoughts about the world, so I find the short fragmentary nature of Twitter suits me well. But mainly I just post things I think are interesting or seems funny or I want to talk about. I have recently decided to be more proactive in terms of posting.

Two features of Twitter I do like are threads & polls. Threads are nice because you can return repeatedly to a subject - collecting a little compendium of interesting things (such as my thread of repurposed tools: https://twitter.com/v21/status/1066734014227189762?s=20). Every time you add a new thing to the thread, it also gets new views on the older posts.

And polls just tickle the game designer in me. It's funny to make people choose between binary choices, and it's interesting to see what they choose. For example, recently I asked my followers to choose between "content" and "IP". Terrible choice, very funny for me.
5. Have you received any jobs, opportunities or financial remuneration as a result of your online presence? If so, can you give examples and maybe explain how those came about?

I don't think I have, directly - but I have received opportunities due to my general reputation, and I feel that the main place I cultivate this is on Twitter. For me, it is kind of equivalent to "existing publicly".

Oh, actually, one direct thing is that most of the promotion for the Patreon I run for CBDQ I do via Twitter. Today I saw someone posting about it & got a few new subscribers as a result - but also CBDQ is inherently connected to Twitter, so that isn't surprising.
6. One thing I am interested in understanding (if you know the answer or even have an inkling) is how artists find online audiences for themselves. Do you know how @v21 reached so many thousands of followers, or @manygradients and @softlandscapes as well?

I am not entirely sure why people choose to follow me, but I do understand why people follow the bots. Many Gradients & Soft Landscapes post nice pictures, their followers see them and retweet them to share them with their timeline. And people see them, see the offer that they're making (see a nice picture on a regular basis) and follow.

Many Gradients also has the additional thing of replies - kids (mainly kids, from what I could see) would enjoy messaging it, asking to be assigned a gradient (that would then, ritualistically, reflect upon them, kind of like tarot). They'd then share the gradient, performing delight or horror at what they'd been assigned. There's something satisfying about that degree of unknown outcomes, and performing in public in that way. But this wasn't intentional on my part - I thought it would be a fun thing, and then the kids really ran with it.

7. As someone who experiences fatigue, do you find bots that auto-generate content an accessible way for you to create art?

Yes, but maybe in a different way than you'd think. Even before my illness, I would be trying to fit in work on my art around paying work. It can be hard to persist on a project when it becomes longer and more involved. So I definitely worked on trying to find ways to create where I could work on a project in a small scale way, starting and completing it
in a few days, or ideally an evening. Bots are ideal for this - the scope is naturally limited, and the means for sharing them is built into the scope. I definitely am a big believer in working, if you can, on a series of small pieces that build on each other, rather than one big piece that has multiple stages of refinement. It means if you stop halfway, you've achieved a few things, rather than got halfway to achieving something. For example: I made Many Gradients first, and when that was quite satisfying, I expanded it into Soft Landscapes. I know people who have made bots and then returned to them repeatedly to refine or expand them as they live with the outputs.

But also making things that can have a life of their own is good. The kids building a culture around Many Gradients is an example of that. And the bots post by themselves, so they do promote themselves and find their own audience. (but on the flipside - I'm not sure how many of those people then engage with me as an artist, versus just engaging with the bot). CBDQ itself is an example of that - I keep the server going & people make wild and interesting things with it without me having to be actively involved.

8. Could the bots be displayed in traditional exhibition settings? How would that feel?

I have shown outputs from Soft Landscapes at a show! Sadly I didn't get to see it (it was in San Francisco), but CODAME showed it. I felt good about it, as you generally do
when people want to put your work in a show :) And calming sphere was included in the Zium Museum virtual exhibit.

It does feel different - I generally believe that the art with bots is the total range of possibilities that the bots can produce, as well as the social context they exist within. And a lot of those are absent in the translation to paper. The larger possibility space could be recreated with some creative showing - for example an interactive exhibit where new landscapes are generated when visitors push a button (although Soft Landscapes deliberately does not generate landscapes on command, giving a vibe of these being pre-existing landscapes that are being selected, rather than responding to your actions). But work always shifts as it is shown in new ways and new contexts - some elements are lost, but other ones can be brought to the fore.

9. Do you find social media to be a creative space? Or do you have more of your ideas when you are afk?

Both? Probably the process is that I see interesting things on social media, but I'll actually reflect on them away from it.

But also one of the great struggles in my life is with procrastination - with avoiding work and problems that I find uncomfortable to face by distracting myself with other things, so I don't have the opportunity to think about them. Social media obviously fills this role quite well, but in the absence of social media I will find other things to fill this space (I spent a lot of time as a teenager reading for this reason). This is obviously a problem
with being creative & producing work! The flipside to this is that I have spent a lot of
time reading about various subjects quite deeply - from social media and other sources
- and that definitely informs a lot of my work & thoughts.

10. Finally, are there any other creatives on Twitter using the platform in ways
you find interesting?

I love the way @pangmeli tweets. She brings these very considered, interesting
perspectives, and curates a lot of beautiful ceramics and other art. And she uses
threads in a very considered way - building up these webs of interconnected thoughts,
appending onto old threads when she has something to say that relates to it. I'm a huge
fan.
gradients
@manygradients

1:57 pm · 8 Nov 2021 · Cheap Bots, Done Quick!

12 Retweets 48 Likes

*tomie 😜️ @TOM1ECORE · 14h
Replied to @manygradients
good one

Tweet your reply

Reply
Section 5:
Profiling Monique Jackson

Section 4 and 5 of this report include interviews with 2 artists who use social media in creative ways. The second interview with Monique Jackson demonstrates a strong example of a single issue social media account where personal experience, news and the science around Covid and Long Covid are brought together through continuous illustrations by the artist. This is also a helpful example of ways in which art and social media can result in online community building.

You can find Monique on Instagram @coronadiary, and on Twitter @stillillcorona1

1. Can you tell me about the @coronadiary account on Instagram?

I started the ‘Still Ill Corona Diary’ in the summer of 2020 after having had a suspected infection of COVID 19 in March. I couldn't get access to PCR testing, feedback from most medical clinicians was that I was one of many presenting with ‘weird and wonderful’ symptoms caused by coronavirus. I hoped after a couple of weeks I would bounce back to feeling my normal self as I was previously fit and healthy, however after a few months there were new issues and I had relapsed in my condition.

Eventually I decided to draw what had happened, to try and make sense out of what had been a confusing time. I hadn't heard of many people who were going through the long term effects of the illness so uploading the images to social media was an experiment to see if anyone else could relate.

I am still drawing what happened since last year. The project has grown to include live stream ‘lockdown lock-ins’ where I chat to other content creators that have responded to the pandemic in their work including; health advocates, researchers, medics and creatives. I also reshare articles that I think are of public interest surrounding developments of the pandemic.

2. How did you find your audience, or how did your audience find you?

When I started the page I followed friends, creatives, writers, journalists and charities whose pages I thought might be relevant to raising the issue of Long Covid.
Corona Diary
A Covid 19 Graphic Journal
Resources, Links in Bio
linktr.ee/stillincoronadiary

Followed by louiseleshleyo, asickmagazine, ezbrahms & 12 more
Eventually I came across patient groups and community sites like Rising Arts Agency / Sick sad girls / Body Politic / Long covid Support and Long covid sos who were focused on raising awareness of Long Covid and other social or chronic health issues.

After the BBC featured some drawings from @_coronadiary in an article in August 2020, I was contacted by a lot more international people.

3. Do you have another Instagram account, website, or other social media profile for your artwork or does it all exist on @_coronadiary? And can you explain the reason for your answer.

I have a website www.stillillicoronadiary.com which contains links to activities I've been involved with relating to Long Covid advocacy and have a twitter account @stillillcorona1.

I created a separate instagram account for @_coronadiary because I initially wanted to post anonymously so I could feel free to express myself and have it as a single issue page. I did decide to waiver my anonymity after realising that it would help journalists cover the story of Long Covid.

I am now setting up a separate website for my other creative work www.monjackson.com.

4. On the second post on @_coronadiary, you write in the caption ‘lucky to have technology to keep me plugged in to the network of humanity.’ Have you found a sense of community through running this account? And has that helped you through the pandemic and Long Covid?

To explain what I meant by the caption is that I could see although having access to digital technology is a privilege, it has been so necessary for me in order to stay connected with others from arranging transport to hospital, PCR testing, access to medical apps and connecting with family over video calls. It's been strange accepting how much more I depend on technology and seemed natural to create and share artwork digitally for this project.

Also yes I have found a sense of community in a way I haven't come across before. Through connecting to meetings held by online groups like Body Politic, Long Covid Sos and Long Covid Support it's been comforting to speak with other people who have had similar experiences to me and also been easier to access updated information with links.
to research papers and scientific webinars. These communities have done some fantastic work getting further medical recognition of Long Covid.

5. How do you decide what to post artwork of? And have you noticed which types of images get the most engagement - the most likes and comments and shares?

I am sharing my story in a roughly chronological order. I have wanted to document notable news articles, resources and ephemera I have come across during the pandemic alongside noting my own emotions and situations personal to me.

I have also wanted to highlight my weird body issues because in the last year it has taken some time for the broad array of Long Covid symptoms to be recognised and communicated in public health messaging. I felt it was important to say what was happening to me and have noticed comments beneath these posts where followers would discuss variations in what they had experienced. I have been surprised at the level of engagement, considering how stigmatising it can be to talk about illness.
6. Especially over the past year, Instagram has seen a rise in people sharing infographics. Do you think presenting information through illustrations and comics has helped offer a more personal alternative to these graphic design templates that other people post?

It's an interesting comparison, I hope that my artwork contains both accurate information and also communicates on an emotional level of what it's like to experience a pandemic from a specific perspective at a specific place and time.

I think graphic design templates can serve a purpose when credible information is referenced correctly.

I enjoy storytelling and drawing from my memories of sensual experiences.

7. You have lots of followers. How do you protect your own health, mental wellbeing, and safety online?

At the beginning I didn't have any foresight into protecting myself other than creating a separate Instagram page.
Now I try to limit the amount of time I use social media and redirect followers asking me for advice to use linktree with signposted resources.

8. Have you received any jobs, opportunities or financial remuneration as a result of sharing your art online on this account? If so, can you give examples and maybe explain how that came about?

Since last year the Wellcome Collection has featured a selection of drawings from the Still Ill Corona Diary on the stories page website.

I then went on to join a Long Covid webinar with the National Institute Health Research (NIHR) in November 2020, later twice this year worked as a public member for the funding of Long Covid research with the NIHR. It's been good to feel I can make a difference beyond making artwork and learn about patient advocacy on a larger organisational level.

I have also been involved in other collaborative creative projects such as co-designing ‘The Radical Histories of Railton Road..’ mural with artist Jacob V Joyce & RAD Cooperative at 198 Gallery, speaking with a pandemic comics online group tour led by artist Rachael House and co-designed a long covid creative programme with social enterprise group 64 million artists.

9. Do you aim to post a certain number of images, do you have any kind of schedule you try to stick to, or even post strategically at a certain time of day? Or do you just share things as and when?

When I started I was trying to draw quickly and produce as many images as possible in order to raise maximum visibility, whereas now I am taking my time a bit more.

I am lucky that since receiving the vaccine some of my symptoms have improved and now I have energy to go outside for long walks as well as take part in multiple projects.

10. Finally, have you found any other accounts where creatives are using their own work in order to discuss a particular issue?

Sick Sad Girlz Club @sicksadgirlz (Insta)
An inclusive page where ‘the sick, the sad, girlz, enby palz and others’ are encouraged to share their stories both on theinstagram and via weekly community meetings.
Rachael House @rachaelhouse
Rachael House UK artist who makes events, objects, performance, drawings and zines
work focuses on feminist and queer politics and resistant histories/herstories

RAD mural Co-operative @radmural (Insta)
Radical & Black led, Neurodiverse & Queer Mural painting cooperative. Social action
and healing through public art.

Fawziyyah Rahman @faw3iyah
Artist and ED nurse whose work explores issues surrounding Health, neurodivergence
and identity.

Ailsa Munro @ailsamunrodesign Print Designer & Digital Artist inspired by
environmental issues.
Section 6: Stigma Project

Unlimited is an arts commissioning programme that enables new work by disabled artists to reach UK and international audiences. In autumn 2021, Unlimited commissioned 4 individual artists/collaborations to respond to the theme of Stigma. The artists were David Tovey, the Kirkwood Brothers, Vince Laws, and BABE WORLD. This section of the report begins with an interview on the social media strategy of Unlimited. It is then followed with interviews with each of the artists to discuss both their approach and their relationship with social media as creators. The Stigma commissions were disseminated online only using the social media channels of Unlimited and Shape Arts. After the interviews, an assessment follows examining how the work was shared over September 2021 and how its delivery might have been improved. Recommendations are offered on how Unlimited and Shape might work online and with artists going forward.

This assessment has been written by Gabrielle de la Puente who co-runs The White Pube. The White Pube is an art and games criticism website established by de la Puente and her collaborator Zarina Muhammed. The website also has an accompanying Instagram account and Twitter account with an engaged, international audience of tens of thousands of readers.
Unlimited’s Social Media Strategy

Handle: @weareunltd

1. What is Unlimited’s approach to Instagram, Twitter and Facebook? Are there any differences in how you use each app? Why does Unlimited have a social media presence?

Unlimited’s overall social media approach is looked after by Artsadmin's marketing team (Artsadmin co-delivers Unlimited). We aim to share content/opportunities that aligns with the programme’s mission: to embed work by disabled artists within the UK and international cultural sectors, reach new audiences and shift perceptions of disabled people.

We post across Instagram, Twitter and Facebook platforms in order to reach the maximum demographic. We don't do paid for posts that often (in line with Artsadmin’s ethical approach) and because we achieve reach organically. We adjust how we share content on each platform.

We pass the power and offer paid Instagram takeovers to artists wherever possible (Artsadmin has been doing this for 3+ years; Unlimited’s Instagram is newer but has been doing this since Aug 2019 when it was set up).

2. Is it one person deciding what images are posted and what words are used? Or is there a team of people conferring, and having meetings to plan what is going out?

Team work! Artsadmin’s marketing team is two people - working 3 days/wk total on Unlimited. We train our Unlimited trainees to deliver a lot of social posts, which they do amazingly. We run campaigns around key moments (ie commissions announcements), but mostly work responsively.

3. Are there ever discussions with commissioned artists about how their work will be shared across Unlimited’s social media accounts or is that just up to the comms team? (If conversations do happen, what kind of questions does Unlimited ask the artist? And do you have any examples that you can point to in terms of what an artist wanted and what was published in turn?)
When artists are commissioned they provide us with the copy in different formats which is what we use to talk about projects, there is back and forth and they sign this off.

We also hold a ‘Welcome Day’ which includes an introduction from the comms team where we explain what we can and can’t do and how to let us know things to share: artists are mainly in contact with the team who work full time on Unlimited (not the comms team), within which they have a key contact and then through this we have a slack channel where key contacts flag things to post for trainees.

4. **It appears Unlimited uses Hootsuite to schedule posts. Is there an aim for how many posts are published, and how often?**

We post on Twitter every day as we have a really responsive audience on there, we aim to post on Instagram 3 times a week to keep up with sharing news and opportunities but in line with trainees’ capacity and the same with Facebook

5. **Is Unlimited happy with the level of engagement on posts? Does it aim for a higher number of likes, comments and shares? Is a high engagement on social media important to the project of Unlimited?**

We want to put out good quality content so it is important to us to that extent and I do report on engagement quarterly but we are not driven by this/ it doesn’t govern our content. I think it will be more important in the future as at the moment we have very limited capacity, it’s just about sharing our blog content

6. **How and why does an image/post/comment make the cut? Are there any aims with the content itself?**

Mainly governed by blog content which shares news, resources – but also see Q2

7. **How do you decide who to follow from the Unlimited accounts?**

We follow all of the commissioned artists, partner organisations, funders, and try to follow key commentators in the sector and cultural organisations, artists, people we have had loose involvement with

8. **Does Unlimited communicate with artists directly in private messages when you are interested in working with artists who might not have an email address readily available?**
We don’t use private messages for this end but our Senior Producer Jo Verrent does communicate with artists through her personal account.

9. Has Unlimited found any artists etc. through social media and approached them for commissioning opportunities or other work? If so, are there any examples?

Jo said: yes - to some extent although not only via social media ie we’d look for other contacts too - we might for example, ask someone to write a blog if we’d seen them online being active re a topic and liked their approach or style.

10. Has Unlimited had to block any accounts? And if so, why?

We have never blocked any accounts.
UNLIMITED
Community
Commissioning exceptional work by exceptional disabled artists. Delivered by @shapearts & @artsadm.
lirktv.ac/weareunltd

Followed by dysplafestival, annahayhayhay, paperfig +47 more
Stigma Artists Interviews

I interviewed all the artists involved in the Stigma commissions to gather information about their specific approaches to social media. We discuss how they feel about having an online presence as a part of their career, and how they protect themselves online.

David Tovey Interview

Handle(s): @david.tovey on Instagram, @davidtovey1975 and @OnefestivalofHA on Twitter

Website: https://davidtoveyart.co.uk

Artist bio: David Tovey is a member of the Unlimited board along with being a formerly homeless artist. He’s an educator and activist who works in a range of media. When it comes to his practise, he is a photographer, painter as well as an installation artist and performance-maker. At the heart off this practice is a very special quality – the ability to bring you to the subject in ways both beautiful and hard-hitting in equal measure in order to raise awareness about the social issues he tackles.

Approach to social media:

1. How do you decide what to post on Instagram?

So thats pretty easy, i guess i like to just put my life up there, so when there is something i’m proud off, or achieved then i pretty much put that up. I used to really over think what to put up but now i’ve really relaxed around the space. I like to share i guess little wins in life, and stuff I love. Snapshots into my head, work and life.

2. Your Instagram is a mix of images of you, your art, your cat, and places you visit. Some artists only ever share pictures of their art. Why do you share lots of different things?

Great question. My whole art practice has been about picking myself back up and into some sort of human being i’m proud off, sharing all the social problems within my work. so i guess every little thing about who i am becomes my art. I want people to know that just because you’ve had a life time of shit thrown at you, from illnesses and social
barriers, homelessness, alcoholism etc etc that the shouldn’t hold you back. I’m proud of my flat, my life, my cat because i nearly didn’t have any of that, up until 2015 i was still trying to kill myself. so i share my life experiences now as part of my art journey. Plus all of it inspires me, it keeps me going, especially my Cat ‘Boris Not Johnson.’ I’m not sure if that makes any sense or answer the question.

3. Is there any of your artwork you wouldn’t post on Instagram? If so, why not?

There is so much I haven’t put up on Instagram. Hundreds of paintings and drawings. not that i don’t like them, i just feel that i’d prefer them to be seen at an exhibit, rather than just seeing them online.

I also haven’t put up all my digital film works or Audio pieces and thats for the same reason. I want people to come see the work, chat with me and go from there.

4. Have you ever gotten work or opportunities because of your Instagram page? If so, can you give me an example?

Not sure, I did sell some work due to instagram, and i never sell work as its not why i went into art. So that was quite nice. I’ve also pick up some portrait commissions but i
don’t like doing commissions, actually i hate them. i feel really trapped when doing commission work. So i stopped taking them unless i feel i have freedom with in the commission.

I’ve also picked up a lot of jobs for public speaking and podcasts, some paid and some not.

5. You have posted 2 videos on IGTV: a train ride and an exhibition invitation for your audience. How did it feel to use IGTV?

Yeah not sure how to use IGTV to be honest, the Ripples of hope one I had to ask someone how the feck to get it up online, i’m such a idiot lol

6. As an artist who is interested in examining issues around mental health, amongst other things, has social media helped or challenged your mental wellness more?

Thats a question close to my heart. I used to be on Facebook but i found it to be a very negative space, it really started to get me down when i started to receive a lot of abuse online for my work with those who are homeless and the Festival i run. It got so bad that
i started to suffer really bad with my mental health and he’d to come off it. so i melted the app.

Instagram i find different, i use it more as a scrap book, so i save posts i like, i share stuff that i want to make an impact with, or what i love etc. I haven’t struggled with my mental space on instagram.

7. Some artists see their social media account as a way to get people to their website. Do you feel this way or do you see Instagram as a valuable thing in and of itself?

I think a bit of both, i prefer if people go to my website as its more detailed and shows a lot more of my work, plus its better to navigate. I think also because of the type of work i do a website is better for people to engage with the work. I can see if i was more of a commercial artist, which i’m so not, i could really see the benefits of `instagram hitting so many more people than a website.

8. Has your relationship with social media or your idea of it changed over time?

Yes most deffo, for me it was just a space to chat with friends and family, especially when i lived abroad, but when Facebook became this evil negative space that just bombarded you with poxy adverts to buy shit you don’t want, i was like i have to leave. I fear Instagram will become the same. hopefully not though.

9. How do you find Twitter in terms of your practice as an artist? Is it a pleasant experience, is it useful at all?

I’m not sure if it makes a difference in my art practice but i know i get alot of ideas with how to promote my work via Twitter, plus when I'm doing a performance its a great way of getting the promotion out compared to other platforms. I tend to get a lot of coverage for the productions via Twitter. But it never guarantees people visiting my work or shows but that's because I make depressing work lol. I also use Twitter more for my protesting and activist work within the homeless community. Its a great space to rant about what's failing within that sector because of my followers tend to work in the housing, homeless or arts sectors, so it tends to hit all three at once. This platform though can also have abuse, when I talk openly about my sexuality or homelessness experience i have received alot of abuse. But the good side of twitter for me outweighs the shit side. I get alot of speaker work from Twitter, its also opened up doors with in the cultural sector for Venues, My Man on Bench Fairytale got its performance venue due to a call out on
Twitter, ended up getting the Mayfield Depot in Manchester. Also my Unknown Soldier got three venues due to a call out on Twitter. Sold work on Twitter.

My Twitter is my Personal thoughts and actions that i'm close to. but it has gained me alot of work, Probably the best social for work. Also the One festival has gained alot from twitter, form venues, to volunteers and being able to find artists across the world to showcase there work. Its a great space also to promote homeless arts. especially as we gain followers, were still a very small festival which relies on volunteers and donations, I have brain damage so can't fill out a funding form so we have never had official funding to do the festival. Hence why Twitter has been so good for us to get people knowing about the shows. That's how we have been able to have the festival in 4 cities across the UK and once in Zanzibar, just by people knowing about us.

My experience of social media isn't great, i've struggled because of the abuse but also thrived because of how its helped our festival and my arts practice personally.
David John Tovey
Artist
Man on Bench, My Solitude, A Soldiers Story, Founder @onefestivalha
Trustee @weareunltf WhatNext Steering Group Member
www.davidtoveyart.co.uk

Followed by submittolovestudios and weareunltf
Babeworld Interview

Handle(s): @babeworld3000

Artist bio: Babeworld is an art collective led by Ashleigh Williams (she/her) and Ingrid Banerjee Marvin (she/her), that seeks to make a more representative art world through the creation of art, fundraising and creating grants, and facilitation of events - for those who are marginalised in the arts. Their work is as diverse as the themes and topics they cover working collaboratively over themes of political and societal identity, specifically disability/access, neurodivergence, sex work and race.

Approach to social media:

1. How do you decide what to post on Instagram? And is there anything you have decided not to post, and why?

Babeworld uses Instagram as a tool to connect with other individuals with similar lived experiences as us. We tend to post what we’re up to, alongside our fundraising projects, and our experiences of navigating the art world. Being a sex worker means Babeworld’s account has been threatened with deletion many times, so I rarely post about sex work, or when I do, I have to do it cryptically.
2. Do you plan posts in advance? Do you have a schedule you stick to?

We have mondays which are for posting our patreon, and every 2 months we have a grant announcement day. We tend to just announce other projects ad-hoc.

3. Have you noticed what type of content on your page gets the most likes/comments? If so, what is that and why do you think it is?

Our content that is memes, grants, or pictures of us are what tend to get the most likes. It’s great that our grants get so many likes and shares because then we’re reaching a wider audience. I think it is people trying to do their bit for marginalised communities, by sharing and liking opportunities.

4. Do you care about how many likes, comments and messages you receive online?

I try not to weigh my value based on likes, comments and messages. Being marginalised on Instagram often means being shadowbanned, threatened with deletion and low engagement. I try not to be affected by our engagement.
5. As creators, do you find Instagram fulfilling? How has your experience of IGTV been?

Instagram has been a really pivotal place for us to form communities with people with similar experiences to us, so in that respect, it has been fulfilling. On the other hand, Insta has a history of demonetizing, deleting and shadowbanning marginalised creators (which we have experienced) - so in that respect, I don’t think it is fulfilling. I don’t mind IGTV, from an artist perspective it’s been a great tool for us to show our video work in full.

6. Do you prefer Instagram or your private Patreon feed for posting art, thoughts and other content?

I post my true thoughts on Patreon, and prefer it that way. It’s a tailored audience that is here for Babeworld and Babeworld only, so it feels like a safe space to get things off my chest. But for general sharing of work, I prefer Instagram.

7. Have you come across any problems with Instagram (could be censorship, deleted posts, or trolls etc.)? If so, how did you deal with that?
We have been censored, threatened with deletion, many many trolls have attacked us in our DMs and publicly. When it comes to trolls, If they ain’t paying the bills, I pay them no mind. When it comes to deletion and censorship, we’ve had to adjust the way we talk about certain topics such as sex work, ultimately I have had to censor my experience to exist freely on Instagram.

8. How do you decide what to include in your Linktree?

We try to keep it as sleek as possible for accessibility purposes, and use it for our website and fundraising. We were advertising onlyfans accounts too, but got threatened with deletion and had to stop.

9. As a group, do you have one person who oversees Instagram or do you share responsibility? How do you manage sharing the account as multiple users?

I (Ash) run the Instagram, with others contributing to graphics, captioning, and creating Alt text. We find it easier to have one point of contact on Instagram, so I can manage the DMs and comment effectively. We have weekly catch up meetings where we discuss any messages or comments that require further discussion.

10. Have you received any jobs or other opportunities through social media? Can you give examples?

A lot of commissions we receive come from our social media presence. We often get emails being like “we’ve seen on your instagram this film and want to screen it” etc. Our instagram presence was the reason for commissioning at East Street Arts, ICA for Anne Duffau etc. We are often given large donations from our grants which run on Instagram too. We also have been offered to advertise work on our instagram for payment.

11. Do you think Instagram is an accessible platform for users and audiences or could it be better?

It is not a universally accessible format. Not everyone gets to engage with Instagram in the same way. Whilst it is making its way to becoming more accessible (using captioning etc) - these aren’t universally used. I think it’s accessible to a certain extent. But we can always do better.
Joy is having your voice heard, considered, responded to and looked after.

"multitask" yes actually my mind and chilling me

as someone who has little interest in connecting with other humans myself, it's nice to live vicariously through others.

what even is it to be "fixed"
Kirkwood Brothers Interview

Handle(s): @kirkwoodbrothers on Instagram & @KirkwoodJonny on Twitter

Artist bio: Kirkwood brothers, the Glaswegian duo, are made up of brothers Jonny and Jordan. Their work examines neurodiversity and mental health to fight the stigma that surrounds it. The work is colourful and made to start conversations around the topics they depict. They prefer to let their work speak for itself, avoiding the pitfalls artists often face when trying to explain their work in written language. They believe this often makes their work feel more relatable and accessible and affords the audience an intimate and individual relationship with their art.

Approach to social media:

1. Do you make art for Instagram or do you want it to be in a physical exhibition? And can you please explain your answer.

I'd love for our work to be in physical exhibitions. I'm honest and open enough to realise that it just seems to fit the fast paced nature of Instagram. So yeah, sometimes we make work specifically for Instagram. Especially the little stories or narratives that spread over a few slides, I quite like that feeling of it being like a comic or zine. I've not tried any other platform yet.. the idea of making a tiktok gives me the boak.
2. Do you like the square format for Instagram? Has it influenced your art at all? Has the square limited you or helped in your creativity?

The square doesn't bother me. It sometimes makes drawings look a little squashed. I usually edit them so they fit so it's also quite nice playing with the format/layout.

3. When you share work, the caption is very brief - if there is a caption at all. Why is that?

I used to try hashtags but tbh it didn't help us get any more traffic and it felt weird. I usually just prefer people to take what they want from the work. A lot of it is straight to the point but others could have a few meanings. I actually get really anxious that people would read the posts and think "awk shut up".

4. Do you have a goal for how often you try to post content online?

During lockdown I started posting daily. We started making work again after a year of not doing much. It really helped to grow our followers... but again I just worry people get fed up of us. I get fed up with myself!
5. Do you find Instagram an accessible social media platform for yourselves?

It's easy to use but I find it just constantly pushes you towards influencer type pages. Jordan didn't at all. He had his own personal account for a while but he found it toxic. He says he struggled with how overloading it can be.

6. As artists who make work about mental health (amongst other subjects), do you think Instagram has helped or challenged your mental wellbeing? Do you do anything to try to protect yourself and your happiness online?

I hate it. I know that’s really silly to say because we have loads of posts but I’ve went through some periods of really piss poor mental health and social media never helps. It’s too easy to compare yourself to ‘successful’ artists. It affected Jordans mental health negatively too. I usually take breaks. Some for a few weeks or even just a few days. I also sometimes just delete the app. I always think I’ll get to 666 posts and then pack it in.

7. Have you noticed what type of content on your page gets the most likes/comments? If so, what is that and why do you think it is?

I used to think I knew. Slides or ones I knew were funny or topical but we made a stupid meme type post and it blew up a while back. I genuinely don’t know what people like, how the algorithm works or what work is popular anymore.

8. Do you care about the number of likes and comments you receive?

The cool answer is no. But of course I do. It’s nice to know people ‘like’ your work. I’ve noticed if I take a break then the likes just plummet. It’s like Instagram’s way of giving you into trouble.

9. Have you received any jobs or other opportunities through social media? Can you give examples?

We have and that’s the biggest reason I still do it. Without it I don't think we’d have gotten many of the opportunities we have. It's ingrained in society now so you have to use the tools available. We get some small commissions every now and then but we’ve also been contacted for bigger projects like murals and workshops through Instagram too.
KirkwoodBrothers
Artist
Glasgow based.
Neuro-diversity/ Mental health/ Autism Awareness.
Dm for info/ collaboration
linktr.ee/KirkwoodBrothers

Followed by: paperfig, theremotebody, tobladobajo +18 more
Vince Laws Interview

Handle(s): https://www.facebook.com/vince.laws.3

Artist bio: Vince Laws is a poet, artist and campaigner who has previously worked with Unlimited through his commission ‘A Very Queer Nazi Faust’. His work seeks to decrease the stigma associated with HIV and mental health problems; for an end to war; against homophobia in football; for LGBT equality; against the pope’s visit to the UK; for disabled rights; and against the government’s treatment of the poor, sick and disabled. He currently has a blog for Disability Arts Online and can be found on Facebook.

Approach to social media:

1. Why do you only use Facebook as opposed to other social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter?

It's the one I joined first and so it's easy to continue. I did use Twitter for a while, but it was back when you could only send 140 characters, and that used to do my head in, often I'd want to share a poem, or joke that just didn't wrk whn u tk out letters! I'm a bit of a technophobe, so better the Devil you know. I feel I spend enough time on FB and to then have to go and do Twitter, and do Instagram... I try to keep creating rather than spend time promoting my work... I mean I do both, of course, but I'm happier doing the creative stuff. It's a kinda love hate relationship, I'm sure I'm not alone. Every now and then I have a week off.

2. Have you ever received work or opportunities from sharing your art on Facebook? If so, can you give me an example?

I've sold artwork. Quite a lot. I'm talking paintings and prints mainly from about £20 -£100. I tried an Etsy shop, but didn't like it, didn't get much response, took it down within a month. Mainly I sell to FB friends, people who see my work on my page. But I've had a few people contact me after seeing my work on Disability Arts Online FB page.

I got a gallery show in Lowestoft recently, thru a FB friend. An artist I'd never met, we are FB friends cos both artists, like each other's work, but never met. Then he started a gallery, and cos of FB invited me to exhibit.
The show I got Unlimited funding for (A Very Queer Nazi Faust) in 2018, started in 2017 when I put a call out on FB for participants, got 13, fundraised on FB. A lot of activist connections, not necessarily paying, but useful.

3. How has your audience as an artist grown online? Have you done anything to find people or have they found you? If so, do you know how?

Slowly. Not much! I have a range of project FB pages, so there's A Very Queer Nazi Faust, I Protest (art show in Norwich), Pimp My Unicorn (art show/collective), DWP Deaths Make Me Sick (series of shrouds, funded by Unlimited, shrouds hung across the stage, then went on tour separately, currently up in the Attenborough Centre, Leicester), and Boris Piffle Johnson (a comedy alter ego I'm developing!). So I tend to tell my Vince Laws FB followers everything I'm up to, but then add to one of these pages depending on the topic. I have wondered if I should set up a separate Vince Laws Artist FB page, but kinda can't be bothered. So I've attracted FB friends through some of those projects. More often it's cos a current FB friend suggests I friend someone for a project etc.

4. Do you feel like your Facebook page has a sense of community?

Yes.

5. Do you find Facebook accessible?

Yes.
6. How often do you post online, and why?

Daily. I enjoy a bit of banter and topical political nonsense.

7. Has anything you posted ever been censored or deleted by Facebook?
Yes. I wrote something satirical they thought crossed a line. I try to be provocative within the rules!

8. You make work that contains political commentary about the current government (amongst other things). How do you feel about sharing this work on Facebook, a social media platform that has been criticised for influencing elections and protecting hate groups?

If there was a more ethical alternative, I'd use it, but it's a bit of a monopoly. I've tried a few similar sites when they sprang up, but if no one else you know joins it too, you give up! There are lots of things about FB I don't like, but I get a lot out of using it. I live in rural isolation, which I love, but I enjoy a bit of banter on FB.

9. Does it matter to you how many likes, comments or messages you receive?

Yes! It's addictive, I know it, little hits of dopamine I think? Depends what I'm sharing. If I've oil painted me and Van Gogh I want lots of likes. If I'm sharing another article about the DWP, I expect nothing. Some of the DWP Shrouds got shared hundreds of thousands of times. Occasionally I'll see images I put out years ago, come back with different text over them, I really like it when that happens, like they've got a life of their own.
Assessments

First, individual assessments are made of the delivery and presentation of each artist’s contribution. Then, an assessment is offered of the project’s overall delivery over Unlimited’s social media channels. The following is not a criticism of the artwork, only how it was shared. Input is given with this in mind, examining how artwork can be presented well, and how artists can be supported in the process.

Kirkwood Brothers Assessment

Kirkwood Brothers commission presented in an Instagram takeover on @weareunltd August 23

This is the first of the Stigma takeovers on @weareunltd’s Instagram account. It is interesting to me that there is no significant lead in to the takeover — no initial posts that says in detail what is going on, who is involved, that there are more takeovers to come, or why this is happening.

Consider why people follow Unlimited’s Instagram account. The likelihood is that followers are made up of disabled artists who want to keep on top of commissioning news and events, arts organisations who want to do the same, and a number of allies who support the overall project of Unlimited and want to follow what art has been produced and where. Do people follow the account to experience artwork online? Do they understand the Unlimited accounts as being a place for display? Ie. not just an account that posts listings, announcements, re-directions to blog posts? If I had seen this takeover come up on my feed, I would want to know more and I wouldn’t be able to.

The first post by @kirkwoodbrothers is simply an illustration with the artists’ collaborative name in. It’s not a very full introduction to who they are or what they do. From the interview with the artists about their approach to social media, I understand that they stick to short captions because they ‘get really anxious that people would read the posts and think “awk shut up.”’ I think when an artist is doing a takeover of an arts organisation’s account that is not known for directly displaying artwork, it is the responsibility of the organisation to make sure both their followers are going to understand what is happening and that the artists are comfortable in the process too. I would have spoken with the artists to decide (at the very least) how the first post was framed by the caption, because this is in part its curation. It could be that the top of the caption spoke explicitly in an institutional voice to introduce what is happening, and then
handed over to the artists’ voice with a colon. It’s important during a takeover to make the takeover clear — people move so fast on the timeline, it’s easy for them to dismiss something, especially if it’s by someone they don’t know.

I do not think 6 posts in a single day is a good idea. I think it should have been 1 post over 6 days. It is just not worthwhile jamming too much content on Instagram — less people, not more, will see it. A slower presentation means people have more of an opportunity to see the work on their timeline, and also can spend more time thinking about the work over the course of 6 days. One day and done is less than ideal.

The #unltdagainststigma hashtag in each of the 6 posts only has work by the Kirkwood Brothers on it, but it’s all next to each other on the Unlimited Instagram page anyway, so it is hard to see the point in the hashtag at all. If the 6 posts were broken up across time (ie. not 6 consecutive days) with other posts in between, or there were other artists using the hashtag to collectively bring the artwork under the same umbrella, I would maybe see the point.

But I am not convinced by the # itself either. In a poll of 953 people who make up art audiences online, only 12% said they click on art-related hashtags to see the content and discussion of wider projects. 88% do not. There’s an argument to be made that a
hashtag is not as obtrusive on Instagram as it is on Twitter, but generally the use of them by arts organisations can come off a little old-fashioned, and also just quite unnecessary. If there had been a bigger push for audiences to get involved and post things about their experience of stigma, it would make more sense. But if that was the case, a different, quicker, easier, clearer # would need to have been used. Or alternatively, the conversation could happen in the comment if people had been invited to chat there instead — which is much easier for audiences to do than posting their own content.

There is a corresponding post on The Kirkwood Brother's own account - of a pigeon - that includes a line, 'post your own experience of stigma using the hashtag… #unltdagainststigma.' I am not surprised that nobody else did so because the invitation was not made enough overall. But more so than that, the # itself is long and confusing (the unltd at the beginning and the 'stst' later on). This hashtag is also niche because once again, a proper introduction has not been made to the project. Not everyone is going to understand what unltd stands for in passing either if they see it away from the central account (tagged on the artist's own post for example) or on the explore page.

In the following posts by the artists, their @kirkwoodbrothers handle is at the very bottom of the caption without a re-introduction of who they are or the takeover that is
currently happening on the page. Plenty of followers will have missed the first post and might only see the later ones. It is essential to always loop people in, but this might have been more effective anyway if the posts were spread out.

The fourth post — the ‘I still feel…’ comic — received much more engagement than the rest of the posts. It was also a popular post on the artists’ own Instagram. The artwork was not only the most extensive of the ones shown here, but the message in the caption lays bare the premise of the entire commission without needing the viewer to have seen the other posts to make sense of it. I believe it works well because of the artwork presented and also because it functions well as a standalone post. It is the type of work that looks like it invites audience members to share their similar experiences, and it would have been good to add a question in the caption that prompted people to share. More comments would have boosted engagement too and it could have snowballed from there. Instagram is very well suited for these types of comic carousels. It is just held back by the way @weareunltd posted about it.

The fourth post received the third highest amount of engagement, I believe because it also works as a standalone post, but it is worth looking at why. Instagram is filled with generic infographics and inspiration/philosophy squares that are not dissimilar from this design. It might be more popular with audiences because this is the type of content that
fills Instagram: a message they can quickly relate to and get behind. But I also think this reveals a problem when it comes to the delivery of the artwork. If curation had been taken more seriously, if the captions had been signed off on in some way, and the artists were more present in the caption itself (which is important in the event of a takeover, speaking to people who don’t automatically know who they are) it feels as though the artwork is at danger of being absorbed by that typical Instagram aesthetic and therefore made anonymous too.

Overall, I think the work is well suited to Instagram as a place for its display, but I think the captions needed to do better work of curation and explanation in order to hold everything together. There is also a wasted opportunity when it comes to a back and forth between artists and audiences.
Babeworld Assessment

BABEWORLD commission presented in an Instagram takeover across September 2-3

Following on from @kirkwoodbrothers, the @babeworld3000 takeover feels more cohesive and comfortable in its tone, but it is cramming in a lot over the 2 days that could have been better delivered if a full week was allocated to the artists. This does not necessarily mean a full week in terms of time for the artists to do the work. Instead, this could have been a good opportunity to queue posts over a longer stretch in order to give detail where there is not enough, or split up detail into multiple posts where too much is said in one go. As the interview with Babeworld describes, the artists already have weekly meetings to decide content so this could have fit well within their practice.

The first post is interesting in terms of the captioning but the image itself does not match up too well with the words written. It might have been an idea to post a portrait of the artists, their logo, or a teaser (still) of the film to come. But the post is still useful in that it explains the takeover is happening, and it explains what it will consist of: a digital commission around stigma and sports, and a celebration of disabled joy.
The corresponding first tweet is much better at giving audiences the core reason this is happening, however. ‘Head over to our Instagram to check out Babeworld’s takeover! Featuring their commission responding to stigma inspired by the #Paralympics and @WeThe15, ‘Shifting the Goalpost’ examining intersectionality and football culture.’ The same message should have been shared across all platforms — a point that is elaborated on in the overall Stigma assessment below.

The caption indicates a full bio for the collaboration will be posted in the comments and down there a 200+ word bio is given. It is a lot of text. Because it is in a comment, when this post is seen from the main feed, users will have to click on the comment to see it in full. This risks a higher drop-off rate. It would have been a good idea to split the amount of text up into 2 posts: an introduction to the takeover, and an introduction to @babeworld3000. It would have helped people digest the information, and it would have generated more content for the takeover as well as Unlimited’s page.

The bio comment could have potentially done with some editing to be more succinct for people moving fast online. When it comes to sharing a bio about yourself on an established arts organisation’s channel, how worthwhile is it listing all the galleries and institutions you have already worked with? It could have been a good idea to list a handful, maybe the most relevant, and also tag them. Tagging them might have pushed
the other organisations to share the takeover too, thus bringing in more engagement and interest.

The second post almost hands off well from the first with ‘@babeworld3000 Ash again’ - but it would be more helpful in these takeovers if just a few more words were spent explaining a takeover is happening for the people who might have missed the other posts. It is especially important to get the wording on this 2nd post right, given it is an illustration that will do well on engagement because it follows a meme format and is applicable to disabled audiences. The first post mentioned the takeover would celebrate disabled joy. Now would have been a good time to underline that — to help audiences get on the same page, to help audiences celebrate disabled joy too. It could have also been an opportunity to ask followers to share their experiences of disabled joy in the comment section, where they could have been in conversation with @babeworld3000. There are no comments and I feel there could have been plenty if the invitation had been made.

The ‘autistic, ADHD, not embarrassed’ post is a good moment to think about the point takeovers from both angles. For the institution, it means artistic content is shared on their page which generally livens up the usual content, and means their work is done for
a while. For the artist, the potential impact is much greater. They can introduce their work to a new audience, they can gain followers from it, and by gaining followers they can find more opportunities by growing their name and their reach. Because the impact is there to try for, it’s important that every single post is fine tuned for online sharing. Every post needs to make the most of that opportunity.

This post shows an animation and a brief caption tagging which of the @babeworld3000 artists made it. If this is the only post I see, I have no idea what the takeover is, who @babeworld3000 are, and why one of them has made this — and I want to know. It’s an interesting lineup when a collaboration has an illustrator within it. What is that like? What does this illustrator like to do? Was it easy for them to make work about stigma, was it personal, was it a moment of disabled joy (like they have spoken about in other
posts)? The 2 other illustrations were made by this illustrator, @whinegums, by they are only tagged and not named. If we knew a little bit more about their interests and the art they make, it could have intrigued more followers to their page. And, as Unlimited is followed by plenty of organisations, it could have been an incognito job advert for @whinegums, like artists posts are in general (but especially for illustration, given the elasticity of the job role).

By the September 3 posts, which consist of a film poster and then the video itself, no introductions or refreshers are given to either artists or takeover. It assumes people have read all other posts.

The film poster could have simply been used as the thumbnail instead of a post on its own, which would have been a better thumbnail than the one chosen because it fits within the square format better (and therefore shows up more clearly on the IGTV tab). It also would have meant avoiding 2 posts in one day and splitting engagement and attention. The caption on the final post is helpful, especially with the credits. A question for Unlimited to consider is: how often, if at all, has the film been reposted to stories with a reminder for people to watch if they missed it?
David Tovey Assessment

David Tovey’s commission presented on Twitter from September 13-17

This commission suits Twitter over the others because Twitter is arguably a better platform than Instagram or Facebook for looping, short-form video content particularly in this aspect ratio. Compared to both takeovers on Instagram, the wording on the four posts is succinct and consistent in framing the artworks as being part of a project about breaking stigma around disability. However, the use of @ and # feels like a busy mess that gets in the way of the work. The writing alongside each video could have been cleaner in a few ways.

First, the principal hashtag itself: #UntdAgainstStigma. ‘Untd’ appears twice and ‘Unltd’ appears twice, thereby splitting up the project. It is a mistake I am not surprised somebody made. Is Unlimited against stigma, or are we all united against it? The hashtag is too long, the wording (especially with the vowels taken out) is unclear, and it is not useful if everything is not even in the same place — half the commissions are on Instagram after all, and half the David Tovey works are under a different # altogether.
Plus, I think if you have to use a # at all, only one should be used. In the first tweet for David Tovey’s work on September 13, there are 4 hashtags and 3 @s in and around what should be a quick message. ‘Inspired by the #Paralympics and @Wethe15, we commissioned artists to examine #disability stigma. Our works this week are part of a repeating series by @DavidTovey1975 of @artshomelessint focusing on #homelessnessCheck out the first of the works below. #UntdAgainstStigma.’ Note the second mistake in not splitting up ‘homelessness’ and ‘Check.’
All the #s and @s slow this message down, and make it visually unappealing too. The vast majority of readers on Twitter appear to just want clean text, so sometimes #s or @s are grouped. Grouping them is not difficult to achieve when words like ‘Paralympics’ do not need to be made into #Paralympics, and ‘Disability’ does not need to be made into #Disability. Single, common words are still easily discoverable. There is no point at all in making them into a # unless the word is modified in some way to make the # specific to the account’s tweets.

A cleaner alternative to that first tweet might be:

‘Inspired by the Paralympics and WeThe15, we commissioned artists to examine disability stigma. Our works this week are part of a repeating series by David Tovey. Check out the first of the works below.

@DavidTovey1975 #UntdAgainstStigma’

This way, the main @ needed and the main # are brought to the bottom of the tweet and people can get through the important information quickly and jump straight to the work. They then know that the artist’s @ is in the tweet too if they want to click through and find out more about them. Personally, I would have left information about @artshomelessint for a tweet later in the project, or I would have added a thread below that introduced the artist with a bio and an image in its own space. The artists on the Instagram commissions introduced themselves and spoken in their own voices in the takeover, but it seems that when it was up to Unlimited to do that work, an introduction wasn’t made.

The second and third tweets introduce yet another # with #BreakTheStigma. This might have been a better # to use all along because it is pre-existing and might then have networked the output of the artwork with other ongoing campaigns. And then the fourth and final tweet uses a third # in #StopTheStigma. One should have been chosen and stuck with, if at all, but both of these are better than #UntdAgainstStigma which feels personalised to a counter-productive end.

Tovey’s interview shows that he sees Twitter as a place for conversation about all the issues his practice touches, and he sees Instagram as a scrapbook. There could have been a reframing of his work’s delivery on Twitter to invite conversation around homelessness. His work could have been linked with any news stories from that week in order to present the artwork as an emotional and personal prompt alongside news, for example. Further, another Instagram takeover could have taken place but this time using the scrapbook approach — the work alongside thoughts, notes made, images,
work-in-progress, or behind the scenes images. Both these avenues feel more lively than the series of tweets that went out.

**Vince Laws Assessment**

**Vince Laws’s commission presented on Twitter from September 13-17**

Continuing with the # count, across posts of Vince Law’s artworks we encounter many more. #BreakingBarriers, #FightTheStigma, #Neurodiversity, #Homelessness, #HIVAwareness, #Stigma, #BreakTheBarriers, (misspelt) #Tokyo2020 and #Ableism. As explained above, excessive use of these continues to get in the way of the artwork rather than accompany it in a positive or informative way.

I find two main issues in the presentation of Vince Law’s work that I think have held this back from better engagement.

![Twitter post](https://example.com/twitter-post.png)
The first is in how each of the works is framed. The description of the subject of the portrait is described up top, and then there is a brief mention at the end that this is ‘part of Vince Law’s work.’ Seeing any one of these on their own outside of the series and without explanation, it is easy to think the person in the portrait is the one that made the work. For example, from October 1: ‘I’m more than a patient’ As part of Vince Law’s series for #UnltdAgainstStigma we meet the stylish lesbian Ella, who’s interested in sci-fi geek, favourite colours are lemon and purple and taking her guide dog for walks on the beach.’ It leaves space for too many questions. If Vince Law is an artist, state that. Or is Vince Law someone that ran a workshop with other people who created their own portrait? Did Ella draw this? I am assuming Ella is real but have I got that wrong? And if Ella is real, what is their relation to Vince? Or is it all imaginary? These questions sound pedantic but it is vital to make this information clear because people don’t stick around to find things out for themselves. Not knowing what is going on might make them hold back on liking, commenting or sharing. Giving them the full artistry of curation and explanation might invite them to stay.

UNLIMITED @weareunltd · 1 Oct
‘I’m more than a patient’ As part of Vince Law’s series for #UnltdAgainstStigma we meet the stylish lesbian Ella, who’s interested in sci-fi geek, favourite colours are lemon and purple and taking her guide dog for walks on the beach.

#BreakingBarriers, #FightTheStigma
The second problem I have here is with Vince Law’s drawings being shared on Twitter rather than Instagram. The square images are cut off by Twitter’s own framing, and people don’t often click on things to see them in full, thereby cutting off the text either side of the illustration. This kind of artwork is well suited to Instagram where many users follow specific accounts that share illustrations and comics.

It is also a surprise that this work was not shared simultaneously on Facebook, which is the artist’s preferred social media platform and one Unlimited is established on too. Vince is tagged in tweets to no end because there is no Twitter account to even tag. On Facebook, Vince’s audience could have helped drive engagement to the post but that opportunity is missed here. Plus, we know from his interview that he is active on there every day.

UNLIMITED @weareunltd · 4 Oct
Finley is a non-binary Autistic person with ADHD. They live above their dad’s Birmingham bike shop and is very good at Pokemon.

Fascinated by the night sky, likes maps but is unemployed.

This is a work as part of Vince Law’s work for #UnltdAgainstStigma

#Neurodiversity.
Final Stigma Assessment

Interpretation:

As somebody looking over these Instagram takeovers and Twitter posts as a whole, I only know that they are part of one project because I received an invitation to assess them. Stigma’s delivery online would have benefited from cohesive branding (visually and in the language used alongside the posts) to help audiences understand the project better.

Looking back over the posts, I also only know why the Stigma commissions were granted because of my familiarity with the project behind the scenes. There is no consistency with explaining the overall project. There is also no anchor page on Unlimited’s website with all the work in one place. There is no single Twitter thread, or Instagram highlight either. An anchor page could have presented a quick explanation as to why Unlimited are commissioning four responses to Stigma, and why now. The answers could have been as straightforward as the Stigma prompt itself. But they should have been there because they are foundational as a way in for the audience.

A webpage could also have acted as an ongoing archive of these online commissions. If there was one in place, it could even be used for any future Stigma commissions too. Better branding of the entire project could have helped give the commission a more established feeling. At the moment, with this lack of interpretation and visual framing, the entire thing feels overly casual and throwaway.

Unlimited already has a visual brand — it is times such as this when that could have come into play in places beyond the website. Simple cues to use might have been the Unlimited pink in a frame around the initial ‘introduction’ posts of each takeover/delivery, or the same frames around text posts at points when the artist wanted to be in conversation with Unlimited’s audience (in the bonus posts I have suggested). Avoiding visual branding is a wasted opportunity not just to be cohesive but to show some personality and colour, and liven things up when it’s needed. Plus, frames or other branding (an icon etc.) would make it easier for people to relocate the projects and enjoy or reference the artworks if they wanted to find them again.

The issue here is that artworks presented in online commissions should still be curated. But because there is no curation visible here, it makes the posts about the artworks feel like regular posts. To me, they do not feel like the unveiling of a commission at all. The way the posts have been shared do not make me feel like Stigma is an event in any
way. That may not have been the intention, but if it was done to tie in with the Paralympics, then maybe it should have been.

**Curation:**

For an Instagram account with 2,170 followers and a Twitter account with almost 10 thousand, the engagement across all of these posts is much lower than I would expect. But it is not just a lack of interpretation that is at fault, but poor curation in terms of the selection and timeline of work too.

The interview with the communications team states that there is a process in place to inform artists what they can and cannot do in the form of an induction, and a copy is signed off too. However, I doubt that this is rigorous enough on the part of the organisation when it comes to a takeover of their account by somebody else.

The word ‘takeover’ can seem a bit strong. It can make the artist think they have complete control over the content delivery, and it can make the arts organisation pass on curation completely because they do not want to get in the way of how other people operate online. However, I think a ‘takeover,’ for want of a better word, should be a series of decisions made between the artist and the organisation making the invitation. It is not a case of vetting or censoring but a case of guiding — of curating — the content.

This guiding should happen based on the experience of the social media managers, the audience they speak to, and their knowledge of engagement on the account. Social media managers and other marketing staff generally grow to have a good sense of what their particular audience enjoys most on the account they run. Engagement might be indicated by likes, a busy comment section, a high amount of shares, or a record of which posts people come back to. If an artist is doing an online takeover of an account, I think it is fair to discuss which posts go out and which do not. It is exactly what happens in physical curation — an artist might bring ten paintings into the gallery but only seven are hung, because those seven happen to work well together. The marketing staff can help secure good decisions when it comes to content posted.

Plus, as the curator decides where the seven paintings are hung around a room, so too should the artist and organisation decide how and when they are going to share content online. It is possible to have a sense of flow in the order posts go out at — an order that tells a complete story with a beginning, middle and end. I write this because there are posts in the Stigma takeovers that might have made better sense if they had gone out in different ways, and there are posts that felt like they were repeating what had already
been said. There are posts that felt missing altogether too — posts that could have been there to pull everything together. These might have alluded to the artistic process, the artist’s ideas, their references, how their work relates to the Stigma prompt, and wider invitations for discussions.

But really, when it comes to selecting which content should go out, besides choosing posts based on their aesthetic, artists could be asked what they want to get out of a takeover in order to help in the selection. For example, an artist might want to siphon followers from the main account and to their own. If this is the case, the artist could kickstart conversations at a specific time and make sure to be active in the comment section to draw attention to their handle. They could go live. They could make the last post of their takeover a notice that this work will continue to be posted out on their own account if followers want to keep in touch. Or, if an artist wants to do research via their takeover, they could make use of question boxes and polls, or they could invite direct messages. Artists should be able to answer what it is they want from a takeover, and curation (as it aims to support the artist) should go from there.

The timeline of each Instagram takeover in particular was incredibly tight. I believe it was too short to make any impact because of the nature of the platform and how posts are shown to followers according to the algorithm. Better curation would have seen posts stretched out over a longer period of time. Approximately one post every day over the course of a week would have grounded everything better.

**Artist fees:**

Artists were given £1500 for their commissions and the two artist groups that did Instagram takeovers were given a further £100. I am in two minds about these figures so I will write out both sides.

First, I think £1500 is a huge amount for the scale of the work produced. Therefore, it would be fair to expect artists to also create online content within that initial figure. This is something that could have been written into a contract. I expect artists would think that a commission to create an artwork and a few days of online posts with captions is a fair deal for £1500. The other part of me thinks that if the commissioning fee is so high for the small amount of work produced, then artists could expect even more money from the commissioner for the work’s delivery on Instagram. A higher fee for the work of a takeover could be justified in time writing captions, appropriating work for the specificities of the online platform, creating bonus content for stories, and time going live or in conversation with followers, and so on. If there was a more thorough planning time
between artists and social media managers, this planning could be factored into the fee as well.

**Instagram vs. Twitter:**

It feels a little arbitrary that two artist groups had their work sent out on Instagram, and two artists had their work delivered via Twitter. To maximise the visibility of the artworks, and to maximise the opportunity to make the reveal of these online commissions into more of an event, I would have done things differently. I would have had the first artists’ work go out on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for that matter at the same time. Then, I would have gone for the second, then the third, and finally the fourth. For weeks in total with each week dedicated to a different artist. Vince Laws work would have worked perfectly on Instagram, and arguably better there than on Twitter. If Vince Laws’ work had been put out on Facebook, it would have benefitted from Vince’s following there.

This approach would have been a lot smoother. The Unlimited Twitter account has substantially more followers than the Instagram account, so plenty of Twitter followers would have missed the Instagram takeovers completely. I think when any arts organisation puts a project out online, or just any news or information, it is a challenge to try to say things clearly without confusing audiences. This is especially true when people spend so little time reading a tweet or an Instagram post, if at all, before moving on to the next one. Splitting this project in two and putting them across two social media platforms that do not have completely mutual followings will only confuse the audience, and that risks them tuning out.

A more cohesive execution across both social media platforms (and Facebook as well) would also have benefited from a shared institutional voice. Unlimited sounds very different between the many profiles. The Twitter tone is precise, succinct, and very connected to other accounts and news stories. The Instagram is much more casual, approachable, and colourful in its voice. The Instagram almost feels more focused on art. The split here might not mean much to people who do not follow both accounts but from an outsider’s perspective, it probably does not help when it comes to moments like the Stigma commissions. A planned delivery across multiple platforms at the same time would have cleared that up.

There could have been even further coordination if artists had signalled something on their own accounts that the takeovers were happening — and this signalling would have been clear if the entire Stigma project had been branded in some way.
**The Unlimited accounts:**

I suspect that the low engagement of these online commissions is due in part to the Unlimited accounts themselves not being used for sharing artwork regularly. Across Instagram and Twitter, the content on @weareuntld consists of posts about art, listings, news, announcements, but not usually art formatted for social media or creative interventions. When art is shared, it is in very tight takeovers that last sometimes as little as 24 hours and even then it is mostly documentation. With many directions on the account and low engagement across the board, it makes me wonder what people follow these accounts for. It also makes me wonder what these audiences *want* Unlimited to use their accounts for. This would be a useful investigation for Unlimited to carry out if it wanted to transform its presence online to be more relevant.

Part of this investigation could also take a closer look at how these accounts are being run versus what audiences would love to see. It could also inspect consistency across accounts, and use of in-app features (polls, threads, pinned posts, highlights, location tagging and so on).

I think there are some aspects of Unlimited’s social media accounts that might not be easily accessible to newcomers. On the bio for example, ‘Commissioning exceptional work by exceptional disabled artists. Delivered by @shapearts & @artsadm’ makes complete sense to an arts professional such as myself but the second clause might be useless information for many. How many people know what it means for two separate organisations to ‘deliver’ something else together? Plus, the @weareunltd handle is clunky and not screen reader friendly — it does not use a camel case format (ie. WeAreUnltd) and it is missing vowels.

If somebody was to go onto these social media pages for the first time, would they get a real snapshot of the personality of the organisation and the artistry it produces, or is it just random posts that aren’t easy to piece together? Many organisations and companies approach their social media accounts as a place to tell one long continuous story through their content. That might be something for Unlimited to aim for.

Good curation and delivery around any project can make people pay attention to work that might not be immediately appealing or suited to the algorithm. Curation of online work should be creative and thoughtful, just like it aims to be in person too. But this is often not the case and it felt invisible with Stigma, and handled very differently project to project to the point nothing felt aligned. But ultimately, Unlimited’s overall presence online is not as refined as it could be, and this might go a way to explaining how the online commissions were not supported enough in their delivery.
Section 7:
Institutional Support

As social media is now such an important tool for both artists and art organisations, it is vital the organisations also understand its impact on the art world. The impact of social media on artists is described in detail at the beginning of this report in Section 1, where it is explained as a newly necessary part of most artists’ practice. Social media is where many artists now make a name for themselves, connect with others, and share an ongoing portfolio of work in the hopes of gaining opportunities for exhibition or other work.

I believe when artists and organisations work to deliver online commissions through social media, all parties should expect to put in an equivalent amount of work, care and thought as they would with a physical outcome. Social media is mostly seen as a casual space and used in a casual way, but because of the impact we understand it can have on an artist’s career, it is important work is delivered well in online spaces.

Despite the value of social media in the art world, many artists feel let down by the ways in which their work is displayed through the online platforms of arts institutions and other organisations. Complaints are made that artists are either left to create content on their own without guidance (in takeovers, lives, etc.) or arts organisations post about their art without the input of the artist. Sometimes they do so in a rushed way that does not feel representative of the work or the artist’s ideas. It appears that it is not common for artists and organisations to meet in order to think carefully about how art is shared online. I believe it is a problem because it is a wasted opportunity to be creative in new ways, and to make strong, clear, accessible content for an expanded audience.

So, what is going wrong? Is the problem that arts organisations do not understand the importance of social media, even though it can do so much? It can support the artists they work with, engage their audience in new ways, build a new audience, and increase the cultural value and relevance of the organisation itself.

It could also be a problem of roles and responsibilities. Maybe there is something lost in communication between marketing staff and curatorial teams. But these are things that need to be ironed out because the artist should feel like their commissioner really cares about what they have made, and that they want to share it in the best way possible. Artists already have enough to do — artists are already expected to market themselves on social media which is a lot of time and work. It is a sore point for many artists that
when creating online commissions for an organisation, or doing takeovers, or other collaborations that involve social media, the artist is often operating alone. This is tough to handle because many arts organisations have salaried staff and sometimes entire marketing departments, and they should be benefitting from that institutional support. Not bringing the whole team together, and not putting in the time to make something creative through social media, is a waste at best — and at worst, it is exploitative when the artist is expected to do everything for themselves.

First, it would be a good idea for an organisation to have a precise, consistent, imaginative approach to social media across all of their channels. Then, when working with artists on their platforms, they should be able to communicate these approaches whilst understanding the approach of the artist’s practice on and offline. That way both parties can find a way to balance how they work, or adopt the other’s strategies, in order to deliver online commissions in ways that feel representative and also comfortable. As discussed in Section 3, some artists do not use social media at all, whilst for many others, it still causes anxiety. The exposure of working with an organisational account that may have a larger following might only add to that stress. Sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas well before the planned takeover or delivery of online work can be a way to mitigate these problems so that the experience is positive and worthwhile.

Learning what it is an artist wants from sharing work on an institution’s social media account should be a part of this conversation, too. Social media is a huge space that curators can use for display, activation and archiving and the answers might lie here. But, as in the name, social media can be incredibly important for its social value too. Social value can now translate to a successful artistic career, and good institutional support for an artist during an online commission can see the artist’s online presence expand, gaining them further work and opportunities.

Is it possible for organisations to incentivise their audience to follow artists? There are strategies companies use to do this, and many artists are taking their lead. Artists will do giveaways to gain followers. For example, they will offer a print and ask their audience to like the image, share it, tag a friend in the comments, and to make sure they are following the account. They then use randomisers online to pick a ‘winner.’ The idea is that the friends tagged in the comments will also want to win the print, so they will follow and do the same, and the engagement will accumulate from there.

Would it be crude or okay for a gallery to do this? Say, to push their audience to follow the artist they are working with and be in with a chance of winning a print or some other token from the project. That is up to the art world to decide but artists are certainly doing it already. But there could be more long term ways for social media accounts to reward
their most active followers — for example, anybody who comments their thoughts on every single day over the course of a week’s takeover could receive something. It doesn’t have to be physical, it could even be a link to a secret online artwork. These are things for marketing staff to devise, but it should be easy to come up with something fun given the amount of in-app possibilities across social media nowadays.

**Final Word**

Social media can have a huge impact on an artist’s career. Artists are already doing interesting things to translate their practice to online spaces, or use online platforms as points of inspiration that their practice can react to. However, the same level of interest is not easily found in the social media accounts of art institutions and organisations. The attention to detail is not there online in the outputs of these institutions in the same way it is offline. The creativity in programming isn’t there either.

It is vital that arts organisations catch up on the impact these platforms can have not only for artists but also for themselves. Exhibitions and other in-person events are still seeing low audience numbers after the lockdowns have lifted. But the COVID-19 pandemic has also underlined the need for good quality online output for disabled audiences too. Sick and disabled audience members who might not be readily able to visit physical spaces deserve to enjoy the outcomes of arts funding and artistic ideas.

Lockdown highlighted the speed with which everyone could suddenly move their work online, but it was not always done with enough precision, creativity, knowledge, or care. The Stigma project by Unlimited is a good example of a delivery of online commissions that could be much improved for the sake of the artists involved and the audience who the artwork is being delivered to. We must work towards a higher quality in all these areas in order to build a better art world.
Image Descriptions

Cover:

The cover illustration shows a blank web browser with different symbols commonly used on social media in a circle around it. Everything is bold, pink, green, black and grey. The symbols include hearts for likes, arrows for sharing and retweeting, a speech bubble for commenting. There is also a hashtag, a paper airplane for mail, a thumbs up, and an @ sign. The illustration is by Rebecca Hinton.

Sections 1-3:

These sections have sporadic illustrations in the same bold style, in pink, green, grey, white and black. Using a squircle notification bubble, different symbols are presented for each section. In the 1st on professional, social and creative reasons artists have social media, there is a tie, speech bubbles with ellipses, and a light bulb. In section 2 on tips for artists, the symbols are an ‘i’ for information, a light bulb, and a speaker phone. For the 3rd section on staying offline, there is a wifi symbol with a line through it, an on/off button with a line through it, and a bell with a line through it too to signify them being turned off.

Section 4 with v buckenham:

For the profile on v buckenham, different screenshots are provided. It starts with a screenshot of their Twitter profile. Their handle is @v21, and the bio reads ‘creative tools & generative art (they/them).’ The display picture shows a white person with long brown hair and clear framed glasses against a pale background. There is a link to their website: v21.io, and it says they are following 3009 people and being followed by 7919.

As discussed in the interview, there are screenshots of different Twitter bots starting with @manygradients which shows tweets an hour apart that are images of different colour gradients in a circle. This screenshot shows a lilac to blue gradient, another with bright neon rings like a planet or a gobstopper, and another that is a grey-green-blue.

Another screenshot shows the Twitter profile @softlandscapes, another of v’s Twitter bots. It has 23.5K followers and the bio says ‘every 6 hours - by @v21 - @v21.io/softlandscapes. Each image posted has a colour in the background with multiple levels of mountain-like shapes in different shades across them.

There are 2 screenshots of tweets from @unicode_garden which posts out a square of emojis and other symbols in different patterns, like a makeshift digital garden. Then, 3 tweets are
shown from @somegoodgirls that read ‘the pleasant girls,’ ‘the lightning girls’ and ‘check out this reflective girl.’ And finally, another screenshot from the @manygradients account that shows a pale blue and pink circle with 12 retweets and 48 likes, and a reply from somebody that says ‘good one.’

Section 5 with Monique Jackson:

This section shares screenshots of Monique Jackson’s instagram account @_coronadiary which is full of colourful illustrations made by the artist. The bio shows 179 posts, 7918 followers, and 1781 following. The bio says ‘Corona Diary, A Covid 19 Graphic Journal, Resources Links in Bio’ and there’s a linktree.

Illustrations by the artist include:

1. People grouped on the overground not wearing masks
2. A Black body wearing underwear with a womb and ovaries in bright red and yellow with vibrating, pain lines around them
3. A person looking to their side with their hand to their ear with red lines spiralling out to indicate tinnitus. There are comments alongside this post with other people describing their experience of tinnitus.
4. A graph that shows the artist’s step count which is high at the beginning of March and then it drops to minimal bars on the graph in the follow months from March to April 2020. The caption says ‘the last day of me feeling well I did 25 thousand steps. When I am stressed I love to move. It’s been a big change.’
5. There is an illustration of a BBC News article showing Mary Agyeiwaa Agyapong in her graduation outfit below a headline that says ‘Coronavirus: Pregnant nurse died of pneumonia, Covid-19 and Caesarean.’

Section 6 on the Stigma project:

This section details how the Stigma commissions were shared online so it includes many screenshots of the social media posts and profiles.

Unlimited’s Twitter profile has the bio ‘Commissioning exceptional work by exceptional disabled artists. Delivered by @shapearts & Artsadm.’ The Twitter picture is white with three magenta dots, and the cover photo shows a performance with a giant white baby in the background and people wearing strange bright yellow suits with big head coverings in the foreground. The account follows 1888 people and is followed by 9700.

There is an example tweet by Unlimited to show the kind of posts that go out. It reads ‘Just two days after #UnltdConnects North, we are already rearing to go! Unlimited Connects Scotland is on 10 November, with pitches, a zine-making workshop, and a focus on communities. Get your free ticket here [link] #BSL and live captioning available.’ There is an image of a black person closing their eyes, with a white dove spreading its wings overtop in a collaged image.
An image of the Unlimited Instagram account shows it is followed by 2180 people, and it has the same bio as the Twitter. There are images of different artworks, sculptures in dark rooms including some dildos and glass bottles, green leaves, close-ups of rolled paper, and it is difficult to tell exactly what the pictures show.

**David Tovey:**

From David’s Instagram profile, we can see a painting hung up and dripping of a face in dark reds, browns, blacks and dirty whites. There is a storyboard in sienna watercolours of a woman, some pills, a half glass full of spheres and other abstract shapes. Another image shows David’s cat leaning forward at the camera, lying on a stool, and the caption says ‘Yes its been such a hard day Boris not Johnson.’ Finally, a screenshot of David’s profile shows various images of the artist in an exhibition, in different places with people. The account has 1602 follows and follows 2230 people.

**Babeworld:**

Babeworld’s account has different artworks including a pale orange gradient background with an illustration of a football shirt, a drink topped with cream, and a pink Nintendo Switch. Another post is pink with white text on top that says ‘being invisible and hyper visible at the same time is a super power.’ Another similar post says ‘I don’t know exactly when it happened but apparently I’ve become a d-list authority on all things class’ with dark text on olive green. A screenshot of the whole grid shows more text posts like this. One says ‘Joy is having your voice heard, considered, responded to and looked after.’

**Kirkwood Brothers:**

Artworks by the Kirkwood Brothers include an orange outline of a person with their head right back, below handwritten text that says ‘head in the clouds.’ Another shows someone crying under a beaming spotlight that has ‘social expectations’ written in the centre of where the light is coming from. A screenshot of the wider profile shows 1717 followers, 1427 following, and different artworks in bright colours of animals, bikes, cars, and text posts.

**Vince Laws:**

Vince Laws’ Facebook page shows the artist smiling next to a dog in a profile picture below a banner of a man and a woman painted in a colourful, abstract style with flowers. A text post says ‘How are you all doing? Well I hope. I’m an artist and I’ve made a series of banners protesting due to DWP policies. I make them on recycled bedding, sewn up, then use spray paint and stencils.’ The artworks in the image are three of these pieces hanging from a washing line, reading rights not charity, respect not charity, and justice not charity in black, white and red.

**Assessments:**
The assessment section looks at the artworks commissioned for the Stigma project and how they were shared online, starting with the two Instagram takeovers. The Kirkwood Brothers artworks for stigma include a green alien with the words ‘tuned to the moon’ written out of order. A text piece says ‘we are not all the same, pull yourself together.’ There are also comics in multiple parts. One says ‘there is light at the end of the tunnel, a cold breeze, where am I. Who am I. I don’t recognise the reflection. These are not my lands.’ This shows an outline of a figure in a black and yellow abstract world, stood in the rain, in a tunnel, looking at a puddle, and on top of a mountain.

The Babeworld part of the assessment section shows an illustration against lilac of headphones and stars. Another image is tinted green, showing a photograph of two artists from Babeworld wearing football kits and crouching next to a dog and a football, with red hearts drawn on top and the title ‘shifting the goalposts.’ There is an illustration of a handshake and under one hand it says ‘being neurodivergent’ and on another it says ‘refusing to be embarrassed by it.’ Another similar style shows a hand pointing at the words ‘autistic, ADHD, not embarrassed.’ And there is a screenshot of the IGTV post of the film, paused on a dartboard.

For David Tovey’s section of the assessment, it shows two tweets. The first says: ‘Inspired by the #Paralympics and @Wethe15, we commissioned artists to examine #disability stigma. Our works this week are part of a repeating series by @DavidTovey1975 of @artshomelessint focusing on #homelessnessCheck out the first of the works below. #UntdAgainstStigma.’ There is a black and white still of the short video attached to this tweet, which shows someone recording from the ground as people pass, and on this still purple captions say ‘as you walk on by.’ The second tweet is similar but the caption reads ‘a mark of disgrace.’

Finally, we see how Vince Laws’ work was shared online starting with an image that has the words ‘stigma holds every body back’ between glittery cutouts of bodies. The rest of the tweets show drawings made with pen, coloured in carefully with what looks like watercolour. There is a black woman in a yellow shirt and blue skirt next to her guide dog, with different images around the portrait including sunglasses, a rocket, desserts, and LGBTQ flags. The next portrait shows Finley who is white with black hair and a blunt fringe, next to drawings of other items: a map, a telescope, pokemon, an xbox controller, the non-binary flag.