

10 July 2020

## HOW TO BE ANTI-RACIST IN THE ARTS

**Benjamin Law, Peter White and Mikala Tai in conversation with Lena Nahlous**

**2pm Tuesday 21 July 2020**

[Sydney Opera House Digital Season](#)

**Stream via the website, followed by an online Q&A, and available on-demand**

What does it mean to be an ally to people of colour? Why is it important to remove blackface from our streaming services? And what can the creative sector do to advance racial equity?

Diversity Arts Australia and the British Council are proud to host this timely conversation in partnership with Sydney Opera House to launch the Creative Equity Toolkit.

Create NSW's Senior Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement Peter White, writer and broadcaster Benjamin Law, and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art's Director Mikala Tai will take on these big questions in a conversation with Diversity Arts Australia Executive Director Lena Nahlous.

"With hundreds of thousands of people around the world, and locally, raising their voices against racism, the need for critical conversations and clear calls to action is more urgent than ever," said Lena Nahlous.

"From the unacceptable deaths of Indigenous people in custody through to increased acts of violence and abuse against Asian Australians since the advent of COVID-19, the need to address racism is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Deep-seated systemic racism has long been raised as a serious problem in the creative sector. The arts have the power to transform the ways in which people experience and think about the world, and be a catalyst for change."

### **About the Creative Equity Toolkit**

The Creative Equity Toolkit is an online tool organised around calls to action with resource links - it's designed for optimal user experience with a powerful search engine, colour-coded resources and links to practical tools like policy templates, case studies and checklists.

The toolkit is a knowledge sharing platform between Australian and the UK developed by Diversity Arts Australia and the British Council in Australia as part of the INTERSECT project. It



would not be possible without support from Creative Victoria, Create NSW and Western Sydney University. Our launch and panel discussion is supported by the Sydney Opera House.

“British Council’s collaborations with Diversity Arts Australia focus on who holds the power in the arts - who decides what work is seen, how it is seen and who sees it,” said Helen Salmon, Director British Council in Australia.

“We know that programmes and platforms are not enough if the structural barriers in our sector remain in place. This resource is a starting point for companies committed to fundamental change, bringing together practical tools, case studies and research to help to drive this essential work.”

The toolkit links to over 400 resources with actions like ‘Develop an Equity and Diversity Policy’, and ‘Set a Diversity Target’ backed up with films, audio, templates, checklists, articles, research and other resources to make them easy to implement.

### About the panel

The panel discussion will take place at the Sydney Opera House as part of the 2020 Digital Season. It will be streamed on the [Sydney Opera House website](#) on 21 July at 2pm, followed by an online Q&A, and available to watch on-demand.

Diversity Arts Executive Director Lena Nahlous will host a conversation with Benjamin Law, Peter White and Mikala Tai.



**Benjamin Law** is an Australian writer and broadcaster. He's the author of [The Family Law](#) (2010), [Gaysia: Adventures in the Queer East](#) (2012), the Quarterly Essay [Moral Panic 101](#) (2017), and editor of [Growing Up Queer in Australia](#) (2019). Benjamin created and co-wrote three seasons of the award-winning SBS TV series *The Family Law*, based on his memoir, and his sold-out debut play [Torch the Place](#) (Melbourne Theatre Company) ran February–March 2020. Every week, Benjamin co-hosts ABC RN's weekly national pop culture show [Stop Everything](#) and interviews public figures for [Good Weekend](#).



**Peter White** is a Gamilaroi Murri from north-west NSW who has held a number of senior positions in major cultural institutions and government arts agencies. Peter White is currently the Senior Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement at Create NSW. He has been a freelance adviser on First Peoples' cultural and creative development and was previously Sydney Living Museum's Head of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement. Peter is committed to championing the inherent cultural rights of First People communities in both managing and practising their own culture and guiding the mainstream cultural sector in effectively engaging with these communities for mutually respected benefits based on the principles of cultural authority.



**Mikala Tai** is the director of 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney. As a curator, researcher, and academic specialising in contemporary Asian art, Mikala has collaborated with local, national, and international organisations to strengthen ties between Australia and Asia.





**Lena Nahlous** is Executive Director of Diversity Arts Australia. She is an experienced CEO, producer, curator, artistic director and facilitator/trainer with a long-term commitment to anti-racism and equity in the creative sector. She has over 20 years-experience in arts, cultural and media organisations where she developed artist brokerage and training programs focusing on artists from culturally diverse, refugee and migrant backgrounds, and established initiatives like the Arab Film Festival and Switch digital media centre. She is the host of Diversity Arts Australia's Colour Cycle podcast.



**Helen Salmon** is Director of the British Council in Australia, with a 25-year career in theatre and public art in the UK and Australia. Helen is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers, and Commerce. She has served as a Board Director of Playwriting Australia and Monkey Baa Theatre Company, and on the Council of the International Theatre Institute's British Centre. Prior to the British Council she practiced as a producer and a strategic development consultant to arts and culture organisations in Australia, in addition to 15 years in London theatre, most recently on the Senior Management Team of the world's leading theatre for new writing, The Royal Court.

The panel will be introduced by Fiona Winning, Director of Programming at Sydney Opera House and Helen Salmon, Director of the British Council in Australia will wrap up the session. Monique Choy, lead writer of the Creative Equity Toolkit, will give a video tour of the digital resource and how to use it.



### About Diversity Arts Australia

[Diversity Arts Australia](#) is Australia's key national organisation working for ethno-cultural diversity in the creative sector.

### About the British Council

The [British Council](#) is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries, bringing international opportunity to life, every day.

The following panellists are available for interviews via Dina Kluska ([dina@pitchprojects.com](mailto:dina@pitchprojects.com)):

- Writer and broadcaster **Benjamin Law**
- 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art Director **Mikala Tai**
- Diversity Arts Australia Executive Director **Lena Nahlous**