

# BREN O'CALLAGHAN

Curator, Senior Producer  
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## CURRICULUM VITAE (1 of 2) - EMPLOYMENT (see CV: Project List for comprehensive listings)

### ABOUT

I'm an accomplished Curator and Senior Producer based in Manchester, UK.

My practice aims to inspire wider public engagement, foster collaboration, and empower artists and audiences. I draw upon a diverse background in curation, production and commissioning, incorporating visual art, film, installation, performance, broadcast, public realm, digital media and publishing.

As Curator at HOME, Manchester, one of the largest multidisciplinary cultural venues outside London, I devised and programmed work for all spaces within the building, from contemporary galleries to cinemas and theatre.

Highlights included the largest UK exhibition to date of the cult film director David Lynch (2019), and the UK solo premiere for gallery and stage of New York based artist Cassils (2021), together with major solo presentations by AL+AL, Rachel Maclean and John Walter.

With Artichoke, I was inaugural curator for the ambitious, UK-wide The Gallery, a public art programme utilising thousands of digital and printed billboards as sites of exhibition for new, thematic and thought-provoking artworks.

For Culture Liverpool, I co-produced the visual arts commission programme in support of Eurovision 2023, funded by DCMS, resulting in 24 new cultural commissions throughout the city-region.

Most recently, I've provided creative consultation for both the UK Science Museum Group and the continuing development of Haigh Hall, Wigan.

In 2019-20 I founded the Manchester Open, a biennial showcase for Greater Manchester artists and largest of its kind in the UK outside London. Attracting 33,000 visitors in the first year alone, it is now established as a recurring fixture in the city calendar.

Award-winning Curator and Producer with BBC Public Space Broadcasting (2004-2010), for which I pioneered a programme of video art, community activity and interactive commissions.

I also make my own work, from the award-winning, festival pop-up Homeground, to the popular Sketch-O-Matic and Scratch 'n Sniff Cinema series.

I remain open to conversation and collaboration.

### **Associate Curator - *Untitled Exhibition 2026***

National Science and Media Museum, Bradford

Oct 2023 - Feb 2024

- Expansion of exhibition prompt into a fully-rounded curatorial concept, supporting package of research and recommendations for investigation, to enable internal curatorial and interpretation teams to develop further.
- Development of exhibition narrative and proposing of items, loans and acquisitions, drawing from Science Museum Group's collections and external sources.
- Research addressing principle examples of former approaches to the topic, including interviews with Curators, Producers, Galleries and Museum collections who had previously explored the field under focus.
- Progression of executive-level discussions with European partners for a global, multi-media broadcast brand, in relation to which the exhibition will respond.

### **Cultural Commissions Producer - *Eurovision 2023***

Culture Liverpool

Dec 2023 - May 2023

- Steering relationships with artists and creative teams to deliver multiple commissions and live events as part of EuroFestival, the official cultural commissioning programme for Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool, UK.
- Ensuring the delivery of multidisciplinary, large scale projects within a narrow six month window (from first commission to final delivery), ranging from exhibition to theatre, performance, digital commission, live event, installation, concert and community participation, managing a combined budget in the region of £1.5 million.
- Particular focus across personal project slate for artists and creatives identifying as LGBTQI+, artists of Ukrainian heritage and nationality, contemporary art/installations, artist film, live performance/theatre, and ensuring wider audience engagement than might otherwise attend.
- Project partners for whom I provided executive level support - from research, production and delivery, to curation and advocacy within a multi-agency context, include Liverpool Cathedral, Homotopia, Black Gold Arts, Unity Theatre, TATE Liverpool, Hackney Showroom, Bluecoat, BBC Storyville, Everyman Theatre, Artists on the Frontline and Parade-Fest.

### **Curator**

Artichoke Trust, London

Nov 2021 - March 2023

- Working with Creative Director Martin Firrell, and Artichoke Trust Director Helen Marriage, to launch an expansive UK-wide outdoor artist commission programme for billboards and digital screens. *The Gallery* is a new kind of cultural institution without walls in collaboration with the OOH (Out Of Home) sector.

- Curator of Season 1: *Straight White Male*, and Season 2: *The State We're In*, generating 1,750 international submissions via open call. In total 21 selected artworks were displayed across 5,000+ OOH sites throughout the UK and online, with 145 million views. Season 2 also led to a media partnership with The Guardian and a pull-out print supplement (1.3 million print distribution).
- Maintaining schedule for selection, commission, production, and installation of artworks in public realm. Oversight of budget and managing contracted project staff. Contribution toward media strategy and ensure compliance addressing ambivalent siting of art-amongst-advertising is fulfilled.
- Aiding artist development, including addressing the specific context of display; from an understanding of the unique conditions of a hyper-visible medium, to the requirements of operators and local authorities, alongside audience encounter and interaction.
- Regular UK-wide travel to engage with artist networks, studio groups and educational settings, raising awareness of submission, identifying artists for direct approach, ensuring representation of practice outside of London and applying localised interpretation of season themes.
- Contributing to fundraising applications and ensure sponsor requirements are met; from required artist criteria, to embedding social practice within each season. Assisting Learning & Participation team, ensuring engagement opportunities were maximised through creation, workshops, digital platforms and tailored educational assets.

### **Curator / Senior Producer**

Independent (freelance)

July 2021 - present

- Contribution to early-phase development and curation of visual art and live event programming at Haigh Hall, a £37.5 million transformation of a historic building and parkland, future home to the Theodore Major collection, with a focus upon the combination of humanities, horticulture and hospitality.
- Ideation and early-phase R&D with artist David Bethell for a bespoke, artist-led sculptural play trail within Haigh Woodland Park, commissioned by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Scoping for a permanent site-specific artwork responding to history and heritage of the Haigh estate, including establishing a working group with staff, patients and visitors to the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary regarding the renovation of the Haigh Plantation Gates and Lodge Houses, which directly face the hospital site.
- Curator, *Cassils: Human Measure*, the artist's first UK solo exhibition and 10-year survey by the New York based transgender visual artist at a critical moment for advocacy, including the world premiere of a new live work for stage, supported by Canada Council for the Arts.

*Human Measure (Live)* subsequently premiered in the USA and Canada at REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney Cal/Arts Theater), Los Angeles, and at Canadian Stage, Toronto, in Oct 2021.

- Producer, *The Earth Asleep*, a feature-length artist film by Dir. Clara Casian with an original score by composer Robin Richards (Dutch Uncles), with support from Arts Council England, The Great

Britain Sasakawa Foundation and The University of Salford.

*The Earth Asleep* premiered upon BFI Player in partnership with the British Film Institute, followed by a world premiere with live musical accompaniment for stage at HOME, Manchester.

- Awarded an Arts Council England Developing Your Creative Practice grant for research into a large-scale artwork incorporating fairground, placemaking and alternative models for cultural participation.

### **Curator**

HOME, Manchester

Oct 2018 - July 2021

- Devising and delivering an original programme of 4 large-scale and 6 mid-scale exhibitions per year at Manchester's international centre for contemporary art, independent film and theatre, prioritising emerging artists and multi-disciplinary practice.
- Managing a Visual Arts team of Senior Producer, Producer, Assistant Producer, Project Assistant and Administration Assistant, together with project-specific freelancers and external agencies - from artwork shipping, event delivery and specialist installation - incorporating Technical and Gallery operations.
- Overseeing a Visual Art budget averaging £500,000 per annum, encompassing gallery exhibition, new commissions, artist film production, performance, live events, publications and artist bursaries.
- Producer and Assistant Director for HOME Artist Film, which while active was amongst the UK's leading initiatives supporting experimental short and long-form artist film commission and distribution.
- Curator and founder of *The Manchester Open*, Greater Manchester's democratic open-call exhibition and most successful in HOME's history, attracting an audience in the first year of 33,000 and now established as a biannual fixture in the city calendar. Winner of the Manchester Culture Awards 2021.
- Increased artwork sales from less than £500 per annum to excess of £125,000 (across 2018-21), via accession of limited edition new commissions to special collections, accessible prices, merchandising where appropriate and limited-edition prints.
- Renowned for creative ideation across curation and wider project programming, from accompanying film seasons to innovative engagement, Q&As, workshops, micro-commissions, hands-on opportunities, and ensuring uplift of regional artistic practice.
- Curator of multiple international, multidisciplinary exhibitions and projects (see additional Project CV by list), ranging from AL + AL, Rachel Maclean, John Walter, Lauren John Joseph, Bruce LaBruce, Nick Burton, Joy Yamusangie, Clara Casian, Robin Richards and Maurice Vellekoop.

### **Senior Producer, Visual Art**

HOME, Manchester

May 2015 - Oct 2018

- Member of senior team responsible for transition and expansion of the former Cornerhouse gallery and cinema to HOME, a purpose-built £25 million arts complex, incorporating the former Library Theatre.
- Production management across a rolling, two-year development window of all exhibitions, new visual art commissions and publications, with all programming conceived and developed in-house.
- Senior Producer for HOME Artist Film commissions and HOME Artist Film Weekender, including roles as Assistant Director for both John Walter (*A Virus Walks Into a Bar*) and Rachel Maclean (*It's What's Inside That Counts*), and Executive Producer across further titles.
- Senior Producer and adjunct support to Curators for *David Lynch: My Head is Disconnected*, the largest UK exhibition to date of the seminal director's visual art, encompassing exhibition, film, live relays and musical performance.
- Co-curator of *NOW: A dialogue on female Chinese contemporary artists*, a series of UK exhibitions, commissions and events for the UK-wide Plus Tate group in partnership with the British Council, China National Art Fund and Central Academy of Fine Arts Beijing.

### **Visual Art Programme Manager**

Cornerhouse, Manchester

March 2011 - April 2015

- Senior Producer for major solo and group exhibitions for artists including David Shrigley, Magda Archer, Rosa Barba, Rashid Rana, Stanya Kahn, Ming Wong, Sophia Al-Maria, and Qasim Riza Shaheen.
- Delivery of multiple new visual art commissions, ranging from installation (Wafaa Bilal's *Virtual Jihadi*), sculpture (David Shrigley's *Self-Portrait*); digital hybrid (Jeremy Bailey's *Master/Slave Invigilation System*); mass participation (Gina Czarnecki's *Palaces*), cabaret and drag (trixie carr's *The Right to RULE*, UK Producer for Peaches Christ Productions).
- Senior Producer for Cornerhouse Artist Film, including Producer of AL+AL's *The Creator*, (Prix du Jury winner, Utopiales Film Festival); Producer, Jamie Shovlin's *Rough Cut* (2013), a co-commission with MOCCA, Toronto and Toronto International Film Festival; Producer, Turner Prize nominee James Richards' *The Bottom of the World* (2015).
- Support for Sarah Perks, Director of Visual Art, including assistance to visiting international curators. Direct line management of Producer, Gallery Co-ordinators, Gallery Staff and Freelance Technicians.

### **Producer**

Independent (freelance)

March 2010 - March 2011

- Producer with Future Everything, an award-winning innovation lab and cultural organisation shaping and providing public engagement with the emergence of digital culture in Europe and beyond.
- Producer with Abandon Normal Devices Festival, with responsibility for a major new commission in experiential/live cinema, resulting in the successful, sold-out European Premiere of Peaches Christ's *All About Evil* live stage and screen presentation.

### **BBC Public Space Broadcasting - Senior Producer / Curator**

BBC Public Space Broadcasting | BBC Live Events

March 2004 - March 2010

- Programming of content and live events for the Big Screens Liverpool and Edinburgh within a network of 23 UK-wide giant digital outdoor screens specialising in arts, culture and new digital commissions.
- Facilitation of partnerships between BBC, respective city authorities and London Organising Committee for the Olympic & Paralympic Games 2012 as part of the UK-wide Cultural Olympiad.
- Generation of site-specific events in public realm, touring initiatives and broadcast relays supported by an open-access outreach policy at grassroots community level.
- Personally awarded x4 London 2012 Cultural Olympiad Inspire Mark Awards recognising exceptional creative innovation, for Places of Public Resort; Camp Pilton (the first interaction design summer school at Glastonbury Festival 2009), Unsilent Night and DaDa Visions.
- Producer of Urban Screens Manchester 2007, an international symposium and public programme investigating the medium of digital screens and billboards in public space.
- New public commissions included The Light Surgeons - True Fictions: New Adventures in Folklore, A Wall is a Screen, Samer Najari's Buffer Zone and the UK debut of MegaPhone, direct from New York's Time Square.
- Delivery with Curator Helen Wewiora of The Bigger Picture National Commissions, a £110,000 Arts Council award to enable four new works of video art conceived for the public realm with Perry Bard, Juneau Projects, susan pui san lok and Esther Johnson.

### **Broadcast Journalist / Producer**

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

March 2001 - March 2004

- BBC Journalist and Producer with a focus upon arts and culture across the North West UK for digital and multimedia platforms.
- BBC graduate of Michael Rosenblum's Personal Digital Production Academy in video journalism.