

# **Our Culture matters**

**‘Autism inclusion in the  
arts on our terms’**

**Jon Adams  
1960-2018**

**#AutisticCultureShift**

**Artistic director:  
Flow Observatory**

**Champion: Mental Health Autism  
Nottingham University**

**Artist: Whatever that may mean**

**Autistic person:**

**Qualifications**

**Definitions**

**Challenges**

**Hopes**

# Qualifications:

I am **Autistic & human**

I feel I have **skills** not deficits

And these skills have been perfect  
for my careers as an **artist** and  
**palaeontologist**

*Selection of artwork  
images*

# Autistic Artists:

The artist's interest cannot be restricted to a single field; he must seek the highest perception of everything, of the whole & its details.

Asger Jorn

# **Autistic Artists:**

We cannot inherit a fixed, unmoving view of life and of art from the past generation.

Asger Jorn

# **Autistic Artists:**

To break and be able to grow together again in a better way: that is the difficult art.

Asger Jorn

# Definitions:

Do autistic people have  
their own culture ?

# Definitions:

Culture

Autism Culture  
&  
Autistic Culture

Neurodivergent Culture

# Definitions:

## Culture

Characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time

# Definitions:

## Culture

The set of values, conventions or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic i.e. Goth culture

# Definitions:

## Culture

The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterises an institution or organisation i.e. Corporate Culture

# Shared Characteristics

Language

Knowledge

Patterns of behaviour

Social constructs

Identity

Habits

Creativity

# Shared Characteristics

create a

**Unique Narrative** informed  
owned & shared by the  
particular group of people  
who created it & so retains an  
innate implied authenticity

**Definitions:**

**Autism Culture**

**Is not Autistic led**

**Autistic people seem  
replaced & excluded from  
evolving this narrative**

**Definitions:**

**Autistic Culture**

**Is Autistic led**

**Involves Autistic people  
informing & evolving their  
narratives**

# Definitions:

Just because **non-autistic** people can't inform write or dictate authentic **Autistic Culture** does not mean they can't benefit from its sharing

**Definitions:**

**Neurodivergent Culture**

**Is Neurodivergent led**

**Involves ND people  
evolving the wider ND  
narrative**

**"NeuroDiversity isn't  
a political stance or  
a movement it's a  
living fact"**

**Steve Silberman**

**"Neurodiversity is all of us**

In the same way that  
**biodiversity** is the variety &  
variability of life on this  
planet

We are a universe of  
star systems in the  
wider  
**Neurodiversiverse**

**Does the autism universe  
have to collide with the  
autistic universe?**

**Does the autism universe  
have to collide with the  
autistic universe?**

**We need cultural exchange  
not cultural imposition**

**Diversity of culture within  
society should be decided  
by the many not the few  
and should be for the many  
not the few**

When accepted & enabled  
**Autistic** people are able to  
not only play an equal role  
in society but often an  
extraordinary and  
necessary one

If you want to see work that is  
**different** commission people  
who view the world **differently**  
but you then have to think  
**differently** about how you work  
with them.

# Challenges:

Systemic attitudes to ND people can't change unless autistic people are recognised as a part of the system & not apart from the system

# Challenges:

1: From the system to autistic people

2: To the system from autistic people

# Challenges:

1: From the system to autistic people

**Language and attitudes**

# Challenges:

1: From the system to autistic people

**Language engender attitudes**  
**Attitudes engender language**

Challenges:

I don't live 'with autism'

# Challenges:

I don't live 'with autism'

I live with my wife and cats

Challenges:

I don't fight 'with autism'

# Challenges:

I don't fight 'with autism'

I fight poor attitudes to me

# Challenges:

I don't live 'on' the **spectrum**

# Challenges:

I don't live 'on' the **spectrum**

I live in a house

Challenges:

**Don't do things for autism**

# Challenges:

**Don't do things for autism**

**Do things for autistic people**

*artwork image*

Challenges:

I don't have mild autism

# Challenges:

“You don’t speak for all autistic people”

Challenges:

What's your special gift?

Challenges:

What's your special gift?

“Surviving”

*artwork image*

Challenges:

#EndAutismNow

Autism free brain  
Preventing autism  
Autism deficits

# Challenges:

Words used by the autism and wider community that degrade us:

“Your not like my child”  
“We’re all a little bit autistic”

# Challenges:

Others deciding what's in the  
**autistic person's best interest**  
vs understanding what  
interests **autistic people**

*artwork image*

# Challenges:

## 3: Internal challenges

Challenges:

**Do I belong?**

Challenges:

**Do I belong?**

If you don't actively include  
us then your actively  
excluding us

Challenges:

**Do I belong?**

They say masking gives you  
mental health issues &  
being made to feel you don't  
belong pushes you further

# Challenges:

You know it's not up to autistic people to justify why we should be included its up to others to justify why we are not included

# Challenges:

Don't try to make us conform  
to another **cultures measures**  
**& standards**

You will damage us

# Challenges:

**Autistic people need asking  
what they need because if you  
assume or guess**

**You will damage us**

# Challenges:

**Autistic people need involving  
on their terms because if you  
apply your rules**

**You will damage us**

# Challenges:

**Autistic people need talking  
with not for because if you don't  
learn authentically from us**

**You will damage us**

*Not rocket science  
artwork image*

Hopes:

That organisations  
will **involve autistic**  
**people**  
and not just include  
**autistic people**

Hopes:

That society will learn to  
accept and respect the  
**autistic** voice and narrative &  
we are 'experts by  
experience' in being **autistic**

Hopes:

That we autistic people will  
be given the space to  
cultivate, grow and nurture  
our own narrative

Hopes:

“As long as the roots are not severed, all is well. And all will be well in the garden”

?

Hopes:

Give us this space to cultivate  
and you will benefit from the  
fruitfulness of the garden

**Arts & Science intermingle  
in Autistic culture**

**You can share in this**

We need to create a positive  
**social chain reaction**

You can help initiate this

We need a **Cultural climate  
change**

You can bring this about

**We call for neurodiversity  
not neuroadversity**

**You are part of this**

**Pants to awareness**

**Understanding & acceptance  
are needed**

**We're an innate part of the  
human landscape**

# **Autistic Artists:**

We are sparks that must  
glow as brightly as possible.

Asger Jorn

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ENGLAND**



# **Autism**

I am not the word  
or the letters  
& the spaces in-between  
or the person in your  
imagination  
U think I should have been

**I am human**