



## **VB Arts Manifesto**

Victoria Baths is a space full of potential. Everyone who visits the building knows it – those who swam here, those who envisage a bright future, those who are intrigued by its past; those who understand the architecture, the social history, the importance of swimming and looking after the body, those who simply come to see.....

Artists have certainly seen potential. Potential in the vast pool spaces, potential in the memories left behind, potential in the social, political context, potential in the dark basements and the leaking glass roofs – potential in the people who pass through. Potential that has been explored to produce some fascinating work.

We recognise that artists have played an important part in keeping the building alive over the past ten years. We recognise that without their work, the journey to save Victoria Baths could have been a more dry and dark one. At the most difficult times, artists' responses to Victoria Baths have inspired us not to be disheartened by the slog ahead or fed up about the past - gone forever, but instead to focus on the here and now – to celebrate, reconsider and look again.

We believe that Victoria Baths has made a distinctive contribution to the arts in Manchester by providing a unique and changing setting for arts activities with links to a variety of audiences.

As Victoria Baths enters the next stages of its evolution, we would like to develop our role as an arts venue including further opportunities for artists to use the space as a place of experiment, exploration and discussion. We want to do this in partnership with other arts organisations, local, national and international artists and local communities.

## **Arts Policy for VB**

Victoria Baths has developed a reputation as a space for The Arts, and a venue that supports artists at all levels in their career to develop new work, by making the building available to them.

Victoria Baths provides a unique opportunity in Manchester because it offers:

- a variety of different large and small flexible spaces for use as exhibition, performance and workspace. These are increasingly difficult to find in the city.
- connection to a wide and diverse audience and community
- a particular social, architectural and decorative heritage that is inspirational to artists and audiences
- a unique atmosphere that adapts to modern technology as well as nostalgia

- a mission to develop the public's understanding of and access to Victoria Baths as a place, through information, education and community activities.

We will support artists in two ways:

1. We will invite artists and arts organisations to propose projects which they themselves finance. We offer space and technical and infrastructure support in return for a fee that is set according to the means of those involved and the amount of access required. No artistic criteria are applied, simply practical considerations
2. We will commission and curate specific artistic projects that develop VB Arts as a recognised and significant contemporary arts space, providing a key service in Manchester's busy arts networks – a space to experiment, share and learn. The criteria for these commissioned projects are:
  - Artistic quality
  - A rigorous educational programme around the work – be that for artists, audiences or community
  - Time and space for innovation, experiment and discussion
  - Opportunities that develop the artists' work in a new way

The aim of hosting artists and arts events are:

1. To help support and develop opportunities for artists at all levels of their career
2. To bring excellent projects and practitioners to Manchester
3. To present artistic projects, residencies, workshops, exhibitions and performances to the public
4. To develop VB as an arts venue that offers something different and complementary to artists in Manchester
5. To provide opportunities for local people and in particular local families to engage in arts activities
6. To maximise the diversity of uses at VB and to bring additional revenue and artistic profile to the organisation, that will enhance its other purposes

Management and specifics

- VB Trust manages VB Arts and the staff are in charge of managing the artist-led projects – receiving, programming and overseeing the proposals.
- An Arts Advisory Group of key arts professionals in the city meet bi-annually to look at progress and advise. These advisors may be approached individually through the year on specific matters.
- An Arts Volunteer Team is established which meets to discuss specific projects and plans. The Volunteer Team and the wider volunteer group are kept informed of volunteering opportunities.
- A Curator / Coordinator currently works freelance to develop the commissioned work.
- An Internship is being planned to host talented graduates looking for experience. This role would encompass marketing, research and administration alongside the curator/coordinator.
- A programme of arts activities targeted at local families.
- A full upgrade of VB marketing material to encompass all arts activities.