

## Transcript: Social Artists for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (SAFEDI) – Prof Amanda Ravetz

1

00:00:17,983 --> 00:00:23,316

(sound of white plinth being dragged along)

2

00:00:24,283 --> 00:00:26,083

My name's Amanda Ravetz.

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00:00:26,083 --> 00:00:29,783

I'm a research professor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

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00:00:30,399 --> 00:00:32,149

I'm a white woman in my 60s.

5

00:00:33,166 --> 00:00:35,149

I'm wearing a stripy top.

6

00:00:35,450 --> 00:00:36,666

Brown and black

7

00:00:37,116 --> 00:00:39,616

and my pronouns are she / her.

8

00:00:40,033 --> 00:00:47,083

I work between visual anthropology,  
in particular filmmaking and art practise.

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00:00:47,083 --> 00:00:53,233

A lot of my work has been how art and  
artists are seen in the world and what their role is.

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00:00:53,566 --> 00:00:56,000

(quiet synth music)

11

00:00:56,166 --> 00:00:58,333

My name is RM Sanchez-Camus.

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00:00:58,333 --> 00:00:59,649

I go by Marcello.

13

00:00:59,649 --> 00:01:04,716

I'm light-skinned Latin American wearing  
a colourful shirt, shaved head and a cropped dark beard.

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00:01:05,416 --> 00:01:09,316

I'm an artist, I'm an organiser,  
and I'm also a consultant

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00:01:09,316 --> 00:01:14,950

working with and helping organisations  
that are interested in and devoted to social engagement.

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00:01:15,583 --> 00:01:24,599

The project title is SAFEDI and that stands  
for Social Artists For Equality, Diversity and Inclusion,

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00:01:24,599 --> 00:01:29,033

and that's quite a good way of  
summing up what the project has been about.

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00:01:29,033 --> 00:01:33,883

We have six projects that were  
commissioned as part of SAFEDI across the country,

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00:01:33,883 --> 00:01:37,566

and that's part of the  
partnership with Social Art Network.

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00:01:38,000 --> 00:01:41,700

We're here in Sheffield,  
where one of the projects is still unfolding,

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00:01:41,700 --> 00:01:47,750

which is taking a plinth as an  
intervention through the city centre.

22

00:01:48,450 --> 00:01:53,916

(sound of white plinth being dragged along)

23

00:01:56,000 --> 00:01:57,533

Hello, my name is Yuen Fong Ling.

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00:01:57,533 --> 00:01:59,599

I'm an artist based in Sheffield.

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00:01:59,599 --> 00:02:02,233

I'm a male of Chinese origin,

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00:02:02,233 --> 00:02:04,733

but originally was born in the UK

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00:02:04,733 --> 00:02:07,683

and I am in my late 40s.

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00:02:07,883 --> 00:02:15,916

The Human Memorial is is an artwork  
which is part performance, part public engagement.

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00:02:16,599 --> 00:02:25,233

And what I do is I pull along a  
mobile plinth through the city centre of Sheffield

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00:02:25,233 --> 00:02:32,933

to engage people in a conversation  
about monuments, statues, memorials.

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00:02:33,616 --> 00:02:35,349

What has been removed?

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00:02:36,349 --> 00:02:39,883

What should replace it  
and what potentially could be the future?

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00:02:43,849 --> 00:02:49,550

So that's what we've been trying to do  
with these six commissions is to really explore

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00:02:50,599 --> 00:02:56,949

what are these aspirations that aren't  
being reflected, what is that diversity?

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00:02:57,533 --> 00:03:03,916

And through social practise,  
through the participation of people

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00:03:03,916 --> 00:03:08,183

is where I found most  
currency in these conversations.

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00:03:09,233 --> 00:03:15,099

At the moment in the UK,  
we're undergoing an incredible change.

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00:03:15,583 --> 00:03:21,349

And that's a change in terms of our own  
identities, as citizens and as groups of citizens.

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00:03:21,833 --> 00:03:26,849

And one of the big changes there  
is how we recognise and redistribute power,

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00:03:26,849 --> 00:03:31,183

and that sometimes takes  
the place of protests in the street.

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00:03:31,183 --> 00:03:36,683

But it also takes the place in how  
organisations are restructuring, how they think

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00:03:36,683 --> 00:03:42,166

and how they approach the people  
that they work with or are meant to serve.

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00:03:42,683 --> 00:03:44,633

Hello, my name's Rebecca Maddox.

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00:03:44,633 --> 00:03:47,383

I work for Sheffield City Council supporting culture.

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00:03:48,250 --> 00:03:50,866

I'm a white woman in my early 50s

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00:03:50,866 --> 00:03:53,483

and I have dark hair and brown eyes.

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00:03:54,466 --> 00:03:58,500

Who we celebrate is really important and

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00:03:59,750 --> 00:04:08,716

I think ideally we could do almost  
with a set of policy notes, I suppose,

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00:04:09,033 --> 00:04:16,600

which the City Council could buy into in terms  
of who we want commemorated in the future and how.

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00:04:17,149 --> 00:04:20,766

So simultaneously,  
whilst this project was developing,

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00:04:20,766 --> 00:04:29,350

I was asked to be part of a  
Sheffield City Council development project

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00:04:29,350 --> 00:04:33,533

looking into the decolonisation of  
statues and monuments within the city.

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00:04:33,533 --> 00:04:37,133

Yuen's plinth project kind of  
intersected with this piece of work

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00:04:37,133 --> 00:04:43,333

because he's using his artistic  
installation to ask some of the same questions

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00:04:43,333 --> 00:04:48,766

about the physical  
representation of people and power.

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00:04:48,766 --> 00:04:49,550

My name is Nathan Geering.

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00:04:49,550 --> 00:04:52,550

I am the co-artistic director of Theatre Deli.

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00:04:52,550 --> 00:04:55,850

I am a mixed race man who is 40 years old.

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00:04:55,850 --> 00:05:00,199

I have short, curly afro hair with a goatee beard.

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00:05:00,199 --> 00:05:05,500

I'm wearing a grey sweater  
with red and blue blotches on.

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00:05:05,500 --> 00:05:07,666

Some would say it's a faded Union Jack.

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00:05:07,666 --> 00:05:12,399

What's great about this project  
is it's kind of like about like decolonising,

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00:05:12,399 --> 00:05:15,949

the statues and things that we see in our cities.

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00:05:15,949 --> 00:05:21,233

Because a lot of these statues, they are  
kind of like from like you know, slave owners and things like that.

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00:05:21,783 --> 00:05:25,716

(gentle music)

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00:05:26,449 --> 00:05:32,883

An interesting quality about Sheffield  
was that there weren't very many statues

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00:05:32,883 --> 00:05:41,883

to false idols because of its working class roots.

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00:05:46,616 --> 00:05:51,166

Some of the naming of streets  
is where the kind of history is embedded.

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00:05:51,550 --> 00:05:59,149

For me, it gives poignancy to walk  
those streets and connect the object to myself.

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00:05:59,416 --> 00:06:02,850

(sound of plinth rolling on pavement)

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00:06:03,433 --> 00:06:13,149

What runs in parallel with the project  
was these very separate but interconnected narratives.

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00:06:13,483 --> 00:06:20,233

One of myself pulling this kind of  
lumbering object through the city centre

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00:06:20,233 --> 00:06:22,866

and the people that it engaged with.

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00:06:23,699 --> 00:06:30,050

But then in another circumstance,  
working with performers and actors

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00:06:30,899 --> 00:06:36,399

to try and develop a kind of  
narrative around the object.

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00:06:36,750 --> 00:06:42,266

So we needed to ensure that we had performers  
that were, you know, quite physically fit and strong.

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00:06:42,266 --> 00:06:46,050

(sound of gentle music)

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00:06:46,050 --> 00:06:51,483

We had circus performers,  
we had breakers, dancers, and we also had actors,

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00:06:51,483 --> 00:06:56,783

and we were able to really get them to connect  
with each other in different ways and really trust each other.

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00:06:56,783 --> 00:07:03,633

One of the exercises we did in the  
workshops was what if we were human plinths?

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00:07:04,016 --> 00:07:08,183

What would it look like to carry someone else?

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00:07:08,483 --> 00:07:12,266

(sound of gentle music)

83

00:07:12,666 --> 00:07:18,916

You might be bearing my weight,  
but I am enforcing, my physicality over you.

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00:07:19,216 --> 00:07:22,316

(music gets louder)

85

00:07:22,583 --> 00:07:27,933

We're really exploring the emotional  
and spiritual kind of connotations and connections.

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00:07:28,116 --> 00:07:31,449

(sound of gentle music)

87

00:07:31,616 --> 00:07:36,800

And what was brilliant is even just by  
simply just changing a hand movement or gesture

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00:07:36,800 --> 00:07:41,433

you could have somebody,  
holding somebody down with their fist up.

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00:07:41,433 --> 00:07:46,233

But then as soon as you just turn your  
palms upwards, it becomes a symbol of help.

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00:07:48,133 --> 00:07:52,633

And there was one pivotal point in  
the process where one of the performers

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00:07:52,633 --> 00:07:57,016

quite clearly said to another participant,

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00:07:57,016 --> 00:07:59,283

I'm not doing that.

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00:08:02,116 --> 00:08:07,666

It made me realise how many times I'd said yes or let things go

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00:08:07,666 --> 00:08:10,066

through that conversation about race.

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00:08:10,066 --> 00:08:13,366

In my own lifetime and in my own career,

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00:08:13,366 --> 00:08:17,533

and I had to in this moment in time,

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00:08:17,533 --> 00:08:19,899

confront it.

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00:08:20,149 --> 00:08:23,933

(music continues)

99

00:08:24,516 --> 00:08:26,416

And from that point on

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00:08:26,750 --> 00:08:28,733

(music continues)

101

00:08:28,733 --> 00:08:30,783

we started to ...

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00:08:35,000 --> 00:08:41,549

... feel the weight of history and that  
historical narrative bear down quite heavy.

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00:08:41,816 --> 00:08:45,600

(sound of plinth rolling on pavement)

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00:08:46,233 --> 00:08:50,750

Your experience within that workshop,  
within that making space,

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00:08:50,750 --> 00:08:53,766

the dialogues that might ensue, that is the work.

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00:08:54,283 --> 00:08:57,899

And if that is the work,  
how do you necessarily put it in a museum?

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00:08:58,416 --> 00:08:59,716

Maybe you can't.

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00:09:03,200 --> 00:09:09,066

It's almost an opportunity through  
this kind of work for local authorities to

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00:09:09,066 --> 00:09:17,283

re-imagine themselves and  
how they can behave with more nuance,

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00:09:17,283 --> 00:09:19,899

with greater humanity

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00:09:21,183 --> 00:09:24,666

and thinking more clearly  
about the effects that they have

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00:09:24,666 --> 00:09:27,383

on the different communities that they serve.

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00:09:27,766 --> 00:09:31,950

And making our services  
more open to everybody.

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00:09:32,416 --> 00:09:38,299

And we think that social artists  
can be the champions of this kind of policy.

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00:09:38,299 --> 00:09:42,799

This way of thinking about what is it  
that we're doing as an organisation?

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00:09:42,983 --> 00:09:44,233

Who are we including?

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00:09:44,600 --> 00:09:46,000

Are we listening to them?

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00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:49,066

Do we understand what their needs are?

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00:09:49,066 --> 00:09:52,850

(sound of plinth on pavement)

120

00:09:53,483 --> 00:09:59,600

The conversation may have started with  
Black Lives Matter, but it you know it says, it speaks to...

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00:09:59,600 --> 00:10:05,049

you know, the rights of disabled  
people, to the LGBT community

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00:10:05,049 --> 00:10:13,149

to marginalised people in general  
and when is the moment we become recognised?

123

00:10:13,383 --> 00:10:17,166

(Gentle music continues)