



MEDIA RELEASE
18 September 2020

I AM NOT A VIRUS AUSTRALIA: ARTISTS AND CREATIVES RESPOND TO COVID-19 RACISM

Diversity Arts Australia is commissioning 20 Asian and Asian Australian artists to respond to Covid-19 racism in the #IAmNotAVirus project. This online art project will be launched in early 2021 via a website and social media platforms. A poll conducted by Essential Media surveyed 1,010 Australians in August 2020, revealed that almost [one third of Australians blame coronavirus pandemic](#) on the Chinese community.

Supported by the Australia Council, City of Sydney and City of Parramatta, the I Am Not A Virus Australia project will pay artists to create new works.

COVID-19 racism

The project responds to the increase in racist attacks since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Diversity Arts Australia partnered with Asian Australian Alliance and Democracy in Colour to collect 410 stories of racist incidents in early 2020 for the [COVID-19 Coronavirus Racism Incident Report](#), including verbal threats, physical intimidation, denial of services, workplace discrimination and being coughed and spat upon.

In response, this artist-led project will confront xenophobia, bust stereotypes and provide a counter-narrative to issues of long-standing racism in Australia that are revealing themselves in the face of Covid-19.

'Anti-Chinese and Asian Racism in Australia is not new,' said Lena Nahlous, Executive Director of Diversity Arts Australia. 'But the advent of the global pandemic has seen an intensification of physical and verbal attacks. This has directly impacted on artists who we represent, as reported in to us initially in our [Creatives of Colour Impacts of COVID Survey](#). This important project creates a platform for artists to respond to this through creativity. Making art and sharing stories are powerful ways to engage people in these discussions and provide counter-narratives'

'To be a victim of a racist attack or to talk about racism as a topic can be a very confronting and traumatic experience. Engaging on this topic through art speaks to a broader audience in many different ways. With racism dividing the world (Covid-19 racism, Black Lives Matter/Indigenous Lives Matter, etc), it is more than ever important to spread awareness and educate, and one of the most effective ways to do this is through art,' said Erin Chew, National Convener for the Asian Australian Alliance and co-author of the COVID-19 Racism Incident Report.

ICE Hub, 8 Victoria Road, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia 2150 | P (02) 8821 9169 | E info@diversityarts.org.au



DiversityArtsAustralia



DiversityArtsAu



DiversityArtsAustralia

diversityarts.org.au

ABN 54 119 220 209



Diversity Arts
Australia



Centre for
Contemporary
Asian Art

Project Producer Kevin Bathman says, "I am really excited by the possibilities for this project to open new conversations and ways of approaching this issue. We hope that it helps to strengthen communities, while also providing support to the artists whose communities are most affected by COVID-19 Racism."

I Am Not A Virus Project

Works in all artform areas are encouraged, including performing arts, screen, dance, standup comedy, visual art, animation, illustrations, dance, prose, poetry, fiction, music and more. All content must be able to be screened online to general audiences. We are seeking works that can be shared online, and priority will be given to these works. We are funding the development of new works and do not anticipate that the works will be fully polished or completed. All works must be new works developed specifically for this project - they can not have been exhibited, published or performed elsewhere.

Artists can submit an Expression of Interest by filling out [this form](#). Projects will be chosen via a selection panel. All commissioned works will be paid.

Dates

Deadline for applications: 10 October 2020

Successful applicants will be notified by 10 November 2020

Work must be completed by 20 December 2020

About the project

This project is an initiative of Diversity Arts Australia in partnership with the Asian Australian Alliance, Democracy in Colour and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art with support from the Australia Council for the Arts, City of Sydney and City of Parramatta. Diversity Arts Australia (DARTS) is Australia's national voice for ethno-cultural and migrant racial equity in the arts, cultural and creative industries. Our work is underpinned by a human-rights ethic, social justice principles, and the belief that a truly diverse spectrum of creative expression and participation is fundamental to a democratic, inclusive and sustainable creative sector, and society.

More information

For enquiries, email kevin.bathman@diversityarts.org.au

