

# Curatorial Proposal by Jonathan Homsey

## Personal Statement:

I want to Queer our future by centering wellbeing. Everyone has the right to feel good and on their own terms. Across my career curating visual arts and dance, I zone in empowering diverse taste making centered of Lived Experience, rather than assuming one size fits all approach. I propose with these two projects *Oh Charlie* and *Untitled Wellbeing Project* I will amplify community-led research and facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue. Through my research inspired by doctors Philipa Rothfield and Thomas Defrantz, I connect curatorial practices with street dance principles of 'breaking the beat,' creating a new rhythm in the world. My experience co-running multiple ARIs in Naarm along unique entryway into curation by dance makes me a refreshing candidate for MADA. I include footnotes and underlined live links to demonstrate my track record.

## Curriculum Vitae and Resumé excerpts:

I am an established Green Room award-winning choreographer who works in the liminal space between dance, public art and dance imagery techniques. I have recently completed a doctorate in participatory performance and bodily empowerment at Queensland University of Technology. I am the 2024 City of Melbourne Arts & Heritage Resident, looking at how multisensory experiences can activate collections to create Soft Participation<sup>1</sup> for performers and audiences. In 2020 alone I became one of the first Queer Curators of Colour ever at Melbourne Museum. My expertise consistently engaging with LGBT+, PoC<sup>2</sup> & Youth come directly from my Lived Experience and working alongside them.

## Curatorial Projects:

### Change from Aotearoa 2023

An international symposium, durational performance and skill development program supported by Creative Australia International Engagement Fund, Chunky Move, Dancehouse, Carriageworks and Basement Theatre.

### Lunar New Year Disco 2020

Programmed a Nocturnal evening for Melbourne Museum commissioned by Midsumma Festival with funds from City of Melbourne. Brought 1250 people for community performances and workshops with international guest artist Pangina Heals, host of RuPaul's Drag Race Thailand

### Anticipation is Half of the Seduction 2018

Curated at BLINDSIDE ARI as their 2018 Emerging Curator. The project was mentored by Hannah Matthews in 2018 during her tenure at MUMA. The exhibition also included sold out performances of Helen Grogan's work *Homage Collage*.

## Selected Professional Achievements:

### Arts Wellbeing Collective 2022-2024

I was their Lived Experience advisory group member for two years advocating for mental health in the arts. For 8 months from 2022-2023 I was their program coordinator and created their Digital Shorts in 6 weeks. This company is commissioned by Arts Centre Melbourne.

### Dancehouse 2018-2023

I worked there using community care as a form of curation across roles as Development, Partnerships and Interim Program Manager. My use of circular project management flourished here as I generated new audiences and fundraised for over \$1,000,000 of public and private funds.

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<sup>1</sup> Soft Participation is a term derived from my research centering neurodiverse entries into participating with art.

<sup>2</sup> People of Colour

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## Selected Board Positions:

BLINDSIDE – Executive Member 2019-2020

Food Court ARI – Board Member 2014-2016

## **Oh Charlie**

TL; DR<sup>3</sup>: *Oh Charlie*, a neurodiverse journey deconstructing the beauty of banality.

**Project Statement:** *Oh Charlie* is a platonic love letter to Dr. Charlie Sofo, whose practice amplifies the beauty in small things. Using textile, video, sound, and new interviews, the exhibition highlights the power of zooming in on a viewer's perception to honour emotional attunement. Audio descriptions by Will McCrostie will ensure aesthetic access. The exhibition invites soft participation, blurring the boundaries between viewer and artwork with immersive, multi-sensory experiences. Inspired by Erin Manning's philosophy on minor gestures and autistic perception, *Oh Charlie* reveals the illusion of a differentiated world through discrete object re-orientation. This heightened intimacy fosters a profound connection, encouraging viewers to sigh and whisper, "Oh Charlie."

**Goal Alignment and Context:** As a curator looking at the impact of a Monash professor and graduate, the project can imbue high stakeholder management, and advocacy for the university as a hub of artistic innovation. Through this retrospective I am engaging MADA audiences but also bringing new underrepresented audiences through its commissioned access elements in turn creating a digital and free public program. My curation style and values are rooted in pedagogy from Hannah Matthews from my 2018 mentorship and in turn imbuing the legacy this university's art department has.

## **When and how will *Oh Charlie* be experienced?**

1. An exhibition between January-June 2025
2. Publicly available Interview transcripts and audio descriptions with recommended reading lists, inspired by the [Overthink Podcast](#).
3. Proposed publicity with Vision Australia and Arts Access Victoria.
4. Public sound played on a timer in conjunction with gallery hours
5. Headphones hung from the space
6. Television with seating

## **Project Cost:**

\$6000 includes additional Sofo loan fees (\$1500) installation support (\$1500), audio description commissions and new interview recording (\$3000). I currently own all required interview electronics and possess audio editing skills. My curator fee also includes my skills in marketing, communications and publicity where I can work to extend the reach of this project.

## **Works Selected (none have been approached or approved):**

\*\*Commissioned interview and transcript with Jonathan Homsey and Charlie Sofo

\*\*Commissioned Audio descriptions by Will McCrostie (formerly of Description Victoria)

\*\*[Fulfillment Centre Series](#) mixture of timed public sound and some on headphones hung in the space

\*\*Chosen works in collaboration with Sofo from [\(\)](#) (2014)

\*\*Priority works include Trail Mix and *(chopsticks)*, *heat moulded*

\*\*[Selected video works on a television set up with adjacent seating](#)

\*\*Mulch (2016), Flower (2018) and a third to be discussed with the artist

\*\*[Excerpts from Sofo's 2021 PhD presentation](#)

\*\*The room is anchored using yellow curtains across all windows of the space.

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<sup>3</sup> Colloquial abbreviation for Too Long Didn't Read.

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## Untitled Wellbeing Project (UWP)

TL;DR UWP centres wellbeing in an interactive exhibition that is a choose your own adventure centred by the viewer's somatic needs.

**Project Statement:** UWP aims to be a ground-breaking curatorial response to [Monash's Wellbeing Strategic Plan](#). It is anchored in a model of Participatory Action Research where I will reach out to staff and students via confidential online surveys and discussions of what they need more of for their wellbeing. I am inspired by the plan's explicit discussion on culture of wellbeing and how it affects the body, mind and spirit. The project will imbue a platform that promotes relaxation and reflection within the viewer's nervous system, fostering a safe space for relaxation rooted in my decades of dance practice using imagery to unlock physical tension.

### When and how UWP be experienced?

1. Movement space led by a somatic instructional installation by Holly Durant
2. Tactile works by Amelia Dowling and Prue Stevenson
3. Humour as medicine with works by Abdul Abdullah and American viral sensation @JSTLBBY
4. Dance imagery meditation for a chair by Caroline Bowditch.
5. Commissioned comic-essay by Queer writer and mental health advocate Kam Greville
6. On a new project-based website which will serve as an archive for one year after the project is completed.

**Goal Alignment and Context:** This project aligns with Monash's commitment to sustained cultural change by destigmatising mental health. Showcased on Open Day, it leverages my doctoral research in Soft Participation to empower and uplift individuals, fostering community connections around mental health. By highlighting neurodiverse art's power for healing, humour, and joy, the project embodies Monash's strategic plan. It aims to transform art engagement, making it more inclusive and accessible, while leaving a lasting impact to internal and external stakeholders.

**Project Cost:** \$12000. This includes: two audio work commissions from choreographer's repertoire of dance imagery by Durant and Bowditch (\$3000), loan fees of 8 works (\$4800), transport of works (\$1500), installation additional support (\$1000), access support for curated artists (\$1250), website hosting and digital costs (\$200) and access consultant (\$1450).

### Works Selected:

\*\*[Abdul Abdullah's series for Art SG \(2024\)](#) juxtaposed with tablets/phones with motivational speeches by [@Jstlbby](#).

\*\*Two textile works from Amelia Dowling. Current proposed works include [A Compendium of Hugs \(2020\)](#) and another to be determined based on survey data.

\*\*Audio recording of Caroline Bowditch's dance class in 'Melting Bones.' She is a wheelchair user, and this recording would be suitable for anyone seated in a chair. I witnessed this class at the Australian Youth Dance Festival in 2018.

\*\*Two textile works by Prue Stevenson, [Handkerchiefs](#) and [Portable Quiet Room](#).

\*\*Commission by Holly Durant creating a movement class that people can do in the gallery space, up to 6 people.

\*\*Essay on the exhibition, arts and mental health by Kam Greville. I met Kam during my time at Arts Wellbeing Collective. Their knowledge as a researcher and comic book illustrator will create an accessible and dynamic contribution.