

November 21, 2019

Response to CAM Report on Systemic Racism in the Arts

ELAN supports the initiative Conseil des arts de Montreal (CAM) has taken on studying and recognizing the systemic racism that is ingrained in institutional, artistic funding structures.

We see CAM's report as the result of years of advocacy work done by grassroots organizations in Montreal, and building on the research put forward by organizations like Diversité artistique Montréal (DAM), who published a [report on systemic racism](#) in the arts in 2018. This is a positive step that sets an example and provides a guideline for accountability in creating an equitable and inclusive society, within our own artistic communities and in our province.

The report recognizes the discrimination that is inherent within funding structures that determine who has access to funding, who makes the decisions, and what determines the validity of a project or artist's practice in the eyes of a funder. The report recognizes that the lives of working artists are more economically precarious than ever, which makes it more urgent to take action on discriminatory practices that exacerbate precarity and inequity. ELAN has also heard directly from artists, cultural workers and arts organizations in Montreal that current funding models contain both cultural and disciplinary discrimination. We support CAM's commitment toward inclusive models of evaluation, and responsible and equitable financing.

As laid out in ELAN's [Inclusion Plan](#) introduced this summer, we feel that implementing more inclusive policies on the part of arts organizations—that celebrate, foster, support and recognize the strength and diversity of all artists in the province—is the only way to ensure a rich and vibrant arts and culture sector. The current atmosphere in the province is one that promotes politics of division and segregation. Only this year, we saw the [introduction of Bill 21](#), immigration reform bills and “value testing”, as well as the renaming of the Ministry of Inclusion and Diversity to “Immigration, Francisation and Integration”. Recent rhetoric also threatens to strip minority rights from immigrants, permanent residents, citizens, and all documented and undocumented migrants who are not “historic Anglophones” as determined by Bill 101.

Artists act as the storytellers of a society—reflecting, recounting, and reacting to the reality around them. Their work acts as a mirror of who we are. Let this mirror reflect and celebrate a wider spectrum of the diversity of language, culture and lived experience.