

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Women’s House** | *Explores diverse women’s identities and expressions*  Evaluation Report January 2020 |

Prepared by Dr Louise Harvey-Golding, Evaluation Consultant

Published by Sangini Women’s Organisation (January 2020)

126 Talbot Road

South Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE34 0RG

Tel: 07930 175 319

Email: projectsangini@gmail.com

Web: https://www.sangini.co.uk/

Contents

[1. Introduction 1](#_Toc29713314)

[1.1. About This Report 1](#_Toc29713315)

[1.2. Sangini Women’s Organisation 1](#_Toc29713316)

[1.3. Women’s House Project 1](#_Toc29713317)

[1.3.1. Women’s House Context 1](#_Toc29713318)

[1.3.2. Inspiration for Women’s House Arts Project 2](#_Toc29713319)

[1.3.3. Key Deliverables of Women’s House Art’s Project 2](#_Toc29713320)

[1.3.4. Envisaged Outcomes for Women’s House Project 4](#_Toc29713321)

[1.4. Evaluation Aims 4](#_Toc29713322)

[2. Methodology 5](#_Toc29713323)

[2.1. Evaluation Surveys: Women’s House Activities 5](#_Toc29713324)

[2.1.1. Survey Design 5](#_Toc29713325)

[2.1.2. Survey Data Analysis 5](#_Toc29713326)

[2.2. Reflective Methods 5](#_Toc29713327)

[2.2.1. Reflective Methods Design 5](#_Toc29713328)

[2.2.2. Reflective Methods Data Analysis 6](#_Toc29713329)

[3. Survey Results 7](#_Toc29713330)

[3.1. Workshop Survey Findings 7](#_Toc29713331)

[3.1.1. Workshop Survey Participants 7](#_Toc29713332)

[3.1.2. Meeting Expectations 7](#_Toc29713333)

[3.1.3. Future Participation in Similar Events 8](#_Toc29713334)

[3.1.4. Learning from Workshops 8](#_Toc29713335)

[3.1.5. Recommending Women’s House Workshops 9](#_Toc29713336)

[3.1.6. Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Workshops 9](#_Toc29713337)

[3.1.7. Suggestions for Improvement 10](#_Toc29713338)

[3.2. Networking Lunch Survey Results 10](#_Toc29713339)

[3.2.1. Networking Lunch Survey Participants 10](#_Toc29713340)

[3.2.2. Meeting Expectations 10](#_Toc29713341)

[3.2.3. Meeting Objectives of the Networking Lunch 11](#_Toc29713342)

[3.2.4. Knowledge and Engagement 11](#_Toc29713343)

[3.2.5. Active Participation 12](#_Toc29713344)

[3.2.6. Most Enjoyable Aspects of Networking Lunch 12](#_Toc29713345)

[3.2.7. Suggestions for Improvement 13](#_Toc29713346)

[3.3. Women’s House Symposium Survey Results 13](#_Toc29713347)

[3.3.1. Women’s House Symposium Participants 13](#_Toc29713348)

[3.3.2. Raising Awareness of Feminist Art 13](#_Toc29713349)

[3.3.3. Learning About Feminism, Intersectionality and Gender Equality 14](#_Toc29713350)

[3.3.4. Involvement in Future Events 15](#_Toc29713351)

[3.3.5. Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Symposium 16](#_Toc29713352)

[3.3.6. Least Enjoyable Aspects of the Women’s House Symposium 17](#_Toc29713353)

[3.4. Final Exhibition Survey Results 18](#_Toc29713354)

[3.4.1. Final Exhibition Survey Participants 18](#_Toc29713355)

[3.4.2. Raising Awareness and Understanding on Feminism and Associated Issues 18](#_Toc29713356)

[3.4.3. Creating Conversations Around Feminism and Associated Issues 19](#_Toc29713357)

[3.4.4. Learning About Feminism and Associated Issues 19](#_Toc29713358)

[3.4.5. Taking Part in Similar Events in Future 20](#_Toc29713359)

[3.4.6. Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Exhibition 21](#_Toc29713360)

[3.4.7. Suggestions for Improvements 22](#_Toc29713361)

[4. Artists’ Journeys 23](#_Toc29713362)

[4.1. Beginning of Women’s House Project 23](#_Toc29713363)

[4.1.1. Theme 1: Artists’ Inspiration and Visions 23](#_Toc29713364)

[4.1.2. Theme 2: Artists’ Aims and Aspirations 24](#_Toc29713365)

[4.1.3. Theme 3: Challenges and Learns 26](#_Toc29713366)

[4.1.4. Theme 4: Next Steps… 28](#_Toc29713367)

[4.2. Reflecting on and Concluding the Women’s House Project 29](#_Toc29713368)

[4.2.1. Theme 1: Artists’ Challenges and Learns 29](#_Toc29713369)

[4.2.3. Theme 2: Challenging Artistic Practice 31](#_Toc29713370)

[4.2.4. Theme 2: Engagement with the Wider Community 32](#_Toc29713371)

[5. Conclusion 35](#_Toc29713372)

[5.1. Professional Development for the Artists 35](#_Toc29713373)

[1.2.1. Summary of Learning and Development for the Artists 35](#_Toc29713374)

[1.2.2. Summary of Challenges for the Artists 36](#_Toc29713375)

[5.2. Public Engagement 37](#_Toc29713376)

[5.2.1. Impact of the Workshops 37](#_Toc29713377)

[5.2.2. Impact of the Networking Lunch 38](#_Toc29713378)

[5.2.3. Impact of Women’s House Symposium 39](#_Toc29713379)

[5.2.4. Final Exhibition Impact 40](#_Toc29713380)

[6. Recommendations 42](#_Toc29713381)

# Table of Figures

[Figure 1: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which the workshops met expectations 7](#_Toc29713382)

[Figure 2: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they would participate in similar activities/events in the future 8](#_Toc29713383)

[Figure 3: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they agreed they learned something new from the workshop 9](#_Toc29713384)

[Figure 4: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they agreed they would recommend the workshop to a friend 9](#_Toc29713385)

[Figure 5: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch met expectations 11](#_Toc29713386)

[Figure 6: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch objectives were met 11](#_Toc29713387)

[Figure 7: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch enabled active participation 12](#_Toc29713388)

[Figure 8: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to how the Women's House symposium raised awareness of feminist art 14](#_Toc29713389)

[Figure 9: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to how the Women's House symposium raised awareness of feminism, intersectionality and gender equality 15](#_Toc29713390)

[Figure 10: Percentage of participants who would attend similar events to the Women’s House symposium in the future 16](#_Toc29713391)

[Figure 11: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to the most enjoyable aspects of the Women's House symposium 17](#_Toc29713392)

[Figure 12: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to the least enjoyable aspects of the Women's House symposium 18](#_Toc29713393)

[Figure 13: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether the Women's House exhibition raised awareness of feminism and associated issues 19](#_Toc29713394)

[Figure 14: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether the Women's House exhibition created conversations around feminism and associated issues 19](#_Toc29713395)

[Figure 15: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether they learned something new about feminism and associated issues from the Women's House exhibition 20](#_Toc29713396)

[Figure 16: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether participants would like to attend similar events in future 21](#_Toc29713397)

[Figure 17: Percentage of comments according to most enjoyable elements of the Women's House exhibition? 22](#_Toc29713398)

## Tables

[Table 1: Most enjoyable aspects of Women's House community workshops 9](#_Toc29713399)

[Table 2: Suggestions for improvements to the workshops 10](#_Toc29713400)

[Table 3: Most enjoyable aspects of Women's House networking lunch 12](#_Toc29713401)

# Introduction

## About This Report

This is an independent evaluation report of Women’s House, a women artists-led project, which investigates the notion of feminism, domesticity and art. The first part of the report provides the background context to the Women’s House project, followed by the evaluation methodology. Subsequently, findings from survey evaluations of the project activities and reflective discussions with the main artists. The final part of the report provides a summary discussion of the findings and recommendations.

## Sangini Women’s Organisation

Sangini (a friend – in Hindi), is a Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women led organisation with a focus on encouraging women from different communities to engage, create, share and build stronger voices by removing barriers they may face in their everyday lives. Sangini challenges inequalities and invisibility of women at grassroots and policy level through cross cultural dialogues and strategic partnerships. Over the past 17 years, Sangini has pioneered an arts-based practice, targeting women from BAME and socially excluded groups, in the Tyne and Wear region. It has worked with over 5000 women of all ages, improving the quality of their lives through arts, building skills and confidence; thereby impacting on their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being.

## Women’s House Project

Women’s House is a women artists-led project that investigates the notion of feminism, domesticity and art. The project aimed to create an impact on the artists' own practice through professional development, personal reflections, site-specific work, public engagement and a public sharing event involving 30 BAME artists, women and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) women. Led by two artists, Padma Rao and Miki Z, this project explored a variety of themes such as equality, violence, abuse, voting rights and feminist art. Over a 12-month period, a terraced flat was converted into a women's art space, resulting in site-specific installation and exhibition of artists’ individual work.

### Women’s House Context

The centenary of suffragette movement and the ‘me too’ campaign were the contexts for the Women’s House project. In a changing cross-cultural environment, the project aimed to provide meaningful relevance and context by raising the debate about gender equality, identity and status of women’s artwork. In addition, the purpose of the project was to inspire, enthuse and generate a notion of enquiry among women from ordinary walks of life about their perspectives, status and femininity as well as create their own responses through a variety of mediums, such as printmaking, drawing, painting and photography.

The project is also contextual to the Creative Case for Diversity.[[1]](#footnote-1) By contributing to ‘Creative case for diversity’ this project offers significant opportunity for both artists to position their work at regional level and potentially gain regional exposure.

### Inspiration for Women’s House Arts Project

This project is inspired by ‘Womanhouse’[[2]](#footnote-2) created by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro in 1972. Womanhouse (January 30 – February 28, 1972) was a feminist art installation and performance space organised by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, co-founders of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) Feminist Art Program. Chicago, Schapiro, their students and women artists from the local community, including Faith Wilding, participated. Chicago and Schapiro encouraged their students to use consciousness-raising techniques to generate the content of the exhibition.

The Womanhouse mansion contained a variety feminist installations, sculptures, performances and other forms of art. By transforming a "woman's space" (such as a kitchen) into a radical feminist art truly made a statement. Here they spoke out about women issues, as well as criticising the patriarchy. This helped women artists and architects gain recognition and acknowledgement that their work could be seen on the same level as men. Using a mansion as their chosen setting furthered their statement. However, the artists creating Womanhouse did so, centralising a white, cisgender, heterosexual and middle-class experience of womanhood in the early seventies.

### Key Deliverables of Women’s House Art’s Project

Four decades on, the Women’s House project considered BAME and LGBTQ women’s narratives around some of the issues they are facing in current times in the light of the wider political, social and demographical changes. The focus of the Women’s House project was twofold:

1. Professional Development of the Artists:

Two emerging diverse artists, Padma Rao and Miki Z, from Creative Women’s Collective with extensive experience of working on women’s equality issues, led on this project. Over several months the artists used studio space and time to reflect on their own practice, and share and create new work at Makaan gallery, a terraced flat, converted into a gallery. Makaan, a women’s art space, offered a domestic environment that was highly conducive to the women who do not normally take part in arts activities.

Padma Rao aimed to create large scale paintings and drawings and new work that would challenge her practice in terms of scale, techniques and ideas. Whereas, Miki Z combined her love of natural building and abstract painting, extending her practice to create large scale sculptural pieces.

1. Public Engagement on the Issues of Feminism, Intersectionality, Domesticity and Art:

The Women’s House project facilitated a variety of activities to explore a spectrum of issues around Feminism, intersectionality, domesticity and art, aiming to raise consciousness about these issues and provide a platform for discussion, reflection and sharing. These dialogues were intended to inform the artists’ own practice, but also help women develop self-confidence about their own identity, recognise issues of gender oppression and find ways to self-express even within their domestic environment. These activities were undertaken during January to December 2019 and included:

* Free creative workshops with women and artists with a focus on BAME and LGBTQ women in the Tyne and Wear area. The aims of the workshops were to engage women in a discussion around the themes explored in Women’s House project and use creative approaches help elicit visual narratives by women. This included facilitating the learning and process involved in the development of an idea into a visual art piece and inspiring women to make own work as part of the project.
* Networking lunch with BAME and LGBTQ women artists, focusing on raising awareness and dialogue on the issues of feminism and the impact on their personal lives and the artistic practice. The aims of the networking lunch included facilitating conversations exploring feminism, gender equality and intersectionality, within the context of artistic practice, and exploring the barriers for BAME and LGBTQ women as artists.
* Working in partnership with Sunderland Culture and the National Glass Centre, a sharing event for women and artists from diverse community groups. Lead artists as well as guest artists presented their own experiences and resulting artwork.
* Final Exhibition of main artist’s work at Makaan Art Gallery.
* Unexpected workshop to mark Judy Chicago’s exhibition at the Baltic Contemporary Art Gallery, Gateshead

### Envisaged Outcomes for Women’s House Project

In a changing cross-cultural environment, this project aimed to provide meaningful relevance and context to local public through collaboration and participation. This project is in line with Sangini's commitment to gender equality by promoting female artists of diverse origins. It was envisaged that the project would have impact in following ways:

* Individual level - The project will engage with diverse women and girls, engendering a spirit of pride, empowering and building confidence among them to challenge and address barriers, such as inequality, oppression and entrenched attitudes about women's roles within BAME communities.
* Community level - The project will facilitate the involvement of BAME and LGBTQ women’s groups and increase their participation in the arts and develop audiences for Sangini.
* Organisational level - The project will strengthen strategic partnerships with Sunderland Culture, Cultural Spring, Apna Ghar, Curious, Angelou Centre and Sunderland Women's Art Group (SWAG). It will raise Sangini's profile and allow continuation of arts delivery in South Shields and Sunderland. It will also increase Sangini's capacity to sustain existing relationships and build new links.

## Evaluation Aims

In accordance with the Women’s House project aims and predicted outcomes, the aims of this evaluation were twofold as follows:

1. Assess the impact of Women’s House project activities at individual, community and organisational levels.
2. Explore the learning, barriers, challenges and developments for the main artists.
3. Present findings outlining impact of Women’s House project.

“*Slate: Black · Arts · World supported Padma’s proposal, for a timely response to Judy Chicago’s seminal Woman House, as we were excited by the prospect of feminism being explored from a Black perspective within the visual arts sector. The resulting symposium and Women’s House exhibition provided an urgent intersectional exploration of Black and Queer feminism. The integration of a community project also engaged women as artists in control of their own narratives.* ***Degna Stone, Enabler – North East [[3]](#footnote-3)***

# Methodology

Data for this evaluation were collected using a mixed methods methodology, including quantitative and qualitative participatory methods. Mixed methods designs are endorsed for research that aims to inform praxis. Quantitative data facilitates the generalisability of qualitative data, and likewise qualitative data can play an important role in clarifying, describing and interpreting quantitative results, as well as grounding the findings in the experiences of participants. For this evaluation, survey methods were utilised to assess the impact of Women’s House project activities on the wider community and other stakeholders. In addition, reflective methods were utilised to explore the main artists’ learning and challenges.

## Evaluation Surveys: Women’s House Activities

Participants taking part in Women’s House project activities, i.e. workshops, networking lunch, sharing event and final exhibition, were asked to complete short surveys following their participation in a specific activity, between January and December 2019.

### Survey Design

Survey formats were adapted for each project activity, but typically consisted of the optional provision of name and organisation, where applicable, impact measuring scales, and open-ended questions. Impact, in terms of learning, enjoyment, meeting expectations, improvements etc., was measured using five-point Likert scales, where participants rank their agreement with a particular statement, e.g. *“I learned something new from the workshop.”* Subsequently, surveys provided opportunities for participants to expand on their answers via open ended questions, e.g. *“Please tell us any suggestions you have for improving our exhibition/workshop in future.”*

### Survey Data Analysis

Survey data were anonymised prior to analysis, in order to maintain the confidentiality of respondents. Survey responses were analysed using descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel. Findings are presented in tables and charts in the results section of this report.

## Reflective Methods

To explore the artists learns, barriers, challenges and developments, reflective methods were utilised. This included one-to-one (with a researcher) and joint reflective discussions, and guided individual reflections, at key time points in the initial, mid and final stages of the project, during January to December 2019.

### Reflective Methods Design

Reflective discussions were facilitated by the main researcher and led by semi-structured proformas consisting of open-ended questions, encouraging reflection of learns, barriers, challenges and developments, in terms of individual and joint practice. In addition, the main artists also provided written reflections, which were guided by several questions encouraging reflection on key areas relating to the initial envisaged outcomes of the Women’s House Project.

### Reflective Methods Data Analysis

Reflective discussions were captured digitally using an audio recording device and were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts and written reflections provided by the artists were anonymised to remove any references towards individual persons or organisations. Data collated from the artists using reflective methods in the initial stages were analysed using a thematic framework, and key themes were fed back to the artists and utilised in the design of further data collection tools and areas of exploration. The final analysis was undertaken following a final reflective discussion between the two main artists, using a thematic approach. Following this analysis, several themes emerged relating to the artists’ personal and joint journeys. These are presented in narrative format in the results section of this report.

# Survey Results

Survey results are presented four parts relating to the individual activities delivered as part of the Women’s House project. This includes:

1. Workshops
2. Networking Lunch
3. Sharing Event/Symposium
4. Final Exhibition

## Workshop Survey Findings

### Workshop Survey Participants

A total of N=19 workshop participants completed evaluation surveys following participation in a Women’s House community workshop.

### Meeting Expectations

Survey participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: *“The workshop lived up to my expectations”* on a five-point scale ranging from ‘Disagree Completely’ to ‘Strongly Agree.’ In total, n=19 participants responded to the question. Of these, 89% (n=17) stated they strongly agreed the workshop lived up to their expectations, followed by 11% (n=2) who stated they agreed a little. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which the workshops met expectations

### Future Participation in Similar Events

Nineteen participants provided a response to the statement: *“I would like to take part in more things like this in the future.”* Of these, 89% (n=17) stated they strongly agreed that they would like to participate in similar activities in the future, followed by the remaining 11% (n=2) who stated they agreed a little. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they would participate in similar activities/events in the future

### Learning from Workshops

A total of n=19 participants provided responses to the statement: *“I learned something new from the workshop.”* Of these, 84% (n=16) stated they strongly agreed that they learned something new from the workshops, followed by 11% (n=2) who stated they agreed a little. Finally, 5% (n=1) stated they neither agreed or disagreed with the statement. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they agreed they learned something new from the workshop

### Recommending Women’s House Workshops

Nineteen participants provided an answer to the question: *“I would recommend the workshop to a friend.”* Of these, 89% (n=17) stated they strongly agrees that they would recommend the Women’s House workshop to friends, followed by 5% (n=1) who agreed a little, and 5% (n=1) neither agreed nor disagreed. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Percentage of participants according to the extent to which they agreed they would recommend the workshop to a friend

### Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Workshops

Eight workshop participants provided additional comments on the aspects of the Women’s House workshops they found most enjoyable. Comments indicated that the most enjoyable aspects of the workshops included opportunities for stimulating discussion around culture, feminism and issues affecting women. In addition, comments suggested that workshop participants enjoyed sharing ideas and inspirations. Finally, participants reported they enjoyed the opportunity to share the space and undertake discussion and activities with other women. See Table 1.

Table 1: Most enjoyable aspects of Women's House community workshops

| Theme | Excerpt |
| --- | --- |
| Discussion on culture and women’s issues | “Stimulating discussions” |
| “Discussions, especially regarding other cultures” |
| “Open discussion.” |
| “Got knowledge on different cultures and women.” |
| “Talking about the inequalities.” |
| Sharing ideas and inspirations | “New ideas” |
| “Hearing about and looking at others work” |
| “Sharing the ideas and concepts and being inspired” |
| “Creating a space of my own.” |
| Being with other women | “Togetherness.” |
| “Encouraged to be with women.” |

### Suggestions for Improvement

Five participants provided additional comments regarding improvements to the Women’s House community workshops. Comments indicated a need for more frequent and longer workshops were. In addition, participants suggested issuing certificates for participation. See Table 2.

Table 2: Suggestions for improvements to the workshops

| Theme | Excerpt |
| --- | --- |
| More frequent workshops and longer workshops | “More time and more sessions” |
| “Longer sessions” |
| “Happen more often” |
| “Needs more workshops” |
| Certificate on completion | “Issuing a certificate of participation.” |
| “Certificate of participation to those who attend” |

## Networking Lunch Survey Results

### Networking Lunch Survey Participants

A total of N=8 participants who attended the Women’s House networking lunch provided responses to the survey.

### Meeting Expectations

Eight participants provided a response to the statement: *The event met my expectations.* Of these, 50% (n=4) strongly agreed that the event met their expectations. This was followed by 25% (n=2) who stated they agreed a little and 25% (n=2) neither agreed nor disagreed, the networking lunch met their expectations. See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch met expectations

### Meeting Objectives of the Networking Lunch

Eight participants provided an answer to the statement: *“The objectives of the event were met.”* Of these, 63% (n=5) stated they strongly agreed the event objectives were met. This was followed by 25% (n=2) stated they agreed a little the event objectives were met and 135 (n=1) neither agreed nor disagreed. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch objectives were met

### Knowledge and Engagement

Eight participants provided responses to the statement: *The event was informative and engaging*. Of these, 100% strongly agreed that the Women’s House networking lunch was informative and engaging.

### Active Participation

Eight participants provided responses to the statement: *I was able to participate actively.* Of these, 88% (n=7) stated they strongly agreed that they were able to participate actively in the event. Whereas, 13% (n=1) stated they agreed a little the event enabled active participation. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Percentage of participants according to agreement as to whether the networking lunch enabled active participation

### Most Enjoyable Aspects of Networking Lunch

Eight participants provided additional comments on the most enjoyable aspects of the networking lunch. Comments indicated that participants particularly enjoyed the opportunity and space for networking between women and women artists. Moreover, participants stated they enjoyed learning about women artists and women’s art history. Other participants stated they particularly enjoyed the enthused, supportive and friendly atmosphere during the networking lunch. Finally, some participants stated they enjoyed being challenged and inspired during the event. See Table 3.

Table 3: Most enjoyable aspects of Women's House networking lunch

| Theme | Excerpt |
| --- | --- |
| Networking and space with other women and women artists | “Meeting other women and sharing our experiences” |
| “Connecting with like-minded people” |
| “Meeting with other artists” |
| “Spending time with a supportive group of women peers” |
| “Art working is often isolating, so it was good to meet other women and artists in this context” |
| “Hospitality and meeting new people” |
| Learning about women artists and the history of women’s art | “I learnt a lot about the history of women artists.” |
| “Learning about important artists.” |
| Enthused and supportive atmosphere | “Friendly, open conversational space about collective issues.” |
| “Open atmosphere, enthusiasm and energy.” |
| Challenge and inspiration | “It was challenging and made me think.” |
| “Making time for reflection on my practice and future plans.” |

### Suggestions for Improvement

One participant provided additional comments suggesting improvements to the Women’s House networking lunch. It was suggested that the event felt slightly rushed and more time for reflective discussion was required.

“Having time for reflection and discussion is very important. The event felt a little rushed.” (Networking Lunch Participant)

## Women’s House Symposium Survey Results

### Women’s House Symposium Participants

Fifty-five people attended the symposium out of which the number of men attending was one. However, the symposium was not advertised as ‘women only’ event. In total, N=15 participants who attended the Women’s House symposium provided responses to the evaluation survey.

### Raising Awareness of Feminist Art

Fifteen participants provided an answer to the question: *How has the Women’s House symposium helped to raise your awareness of feminist art?* The majority of comments (56%/n=9) indicated that the speakers and artists presenting helped raised awareness of feminism and art.

“More visibility of local, national and global artists and initiatives.” (Symposium Participant)

Following this, 19% (n=3) of comments indicated the event raised awareness of feminist art. Finally, 12% (n=2) of comments stated the event highlighted gender inequality in the art community and in art history. In addition, 12% (n=2) of comments claiming the supportive atmosphere was conductive to awareness raising. See Figure 8.

“Raised awareness on female experience and invisibility.” (Symposium Participant)

Figure 8: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to how the Women's House symposium raised awareness of feminist art

### Learning About Feminism, Intersectionality and Gender Equality

Fourteen participants provided an answer to the question: *How has the symposium increased your learning about feminism, intersectionality and gender equality?* Twenty-five percent (n=5) of comments indicated that the Women’s House symposium had increased knowledge and awareness in general on the issues of feminism, intersectionality and gender equality.

“As a mixed heritage woman, I am aware of my own connection to it.” (Symposium Participant)

“Greatly increased my awareness of a range of issues and concepts.” (Symposium Participant)

Following this, 20% (n=4) of comments suggested the symposium had increased knowledge in intersectionality, especially pertaining to BAME and LGBTQ issues.

In addition, 20% (n=4) of comments implied that the speakers and presenters had increased knowledge and awareness about the issues.

“It was amazing and inspiring to hear about others' experiences and work.” (Symposium Participant)

Other comments (15%/n=3) highlighted the learning gained by networking and gaining contacts in the community.

“Developed knowledge regarding arts and the community.” (Symposium Participant)

Moreover, space for discussion and exploration of the issues was also raised in 10% (n=2) of comments as an aspect involved in raising awareness on the issues.

The remaining 10% (n=9) of comments highlighted an increased awareness of the lack of parity for women in art and an absence of spaces and opportunities to meet and discuss the issues of about feminism, intersectionality and gender equality. See Figure 9.

“How women are under-represented in galleries.” (Symposium Participant)

Figure 9: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to how the Women's House symposium raised awareness of feminism, intersectionality and gender equality

### Involvement in Future Events

Fifteen symposium participants provided a response to the question: *Would you like to be involved in future events?* Of these, 87% (n=13) stated they would like to be involved in similar events in future. Whereas, 13% (n=2) stated they would not like to be involved in similar events. See Figure 10.

Figure 10: Percentage of participants who would attend similar events to the Women’s House symposium in the future

Participants who answered ‘Yes,’ were asked what type of events they would like to have the opportunity to attend in future. Answers are as follows:

* Black feminism
* Queer arts
* Queer feminist arts
* Feminist art
* Opportunities to discuss and develop the issues more
* Structural dismantling - how do you change the systems?
* Events that are women focused
* Intersectionality
* More of the same type of event

### Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Symposium

Fifteen participants provided an answer to the question: *What did you enjoy most?* Sixty percent (n=9) of comments suggested that participants most enjoyed networking, sharing experiences and making connections with other women/artists. Following this, 20% (n=3) of comments suggested that participants enjoyed learning about women's issues, women in art, feminism, intersectionality and gender. In addition, 20% (n=3) of comments indicated that networking, sharing experiences and making connections with other women/artists were enjoy able aspects of the Women’s House symposium. See Figure 11.

“Listening to and seeing the different verbal and visual, personal interpretations of feminism and artistic representation of gender.” (Symposium Participant)

Figure 11: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to the most enjoyable aspects of the Women's House symposium

### Least Enjoyable Aspects of the Women’s House Symposium

Fifteen participants provided a response to the question: *What was your least favourite part?* The majority (505/n=9) of comments were associated with problems with the room and technical issues, which affected the acoustic of the presentations. Following this, 17% (n=3) of comments highlighted the absence of prominent male members of the local community. In addition, 17% (n=3) of comments raised the issue of the lack of planned comfort breaks given the intensity of the day’s activities. Finally, other comments highlighted that the day was too short and there was a lack of gluten free diet options. See Figure 12.

“Quite hard to do without a coffee and brain break with so many ideas to take on board.” (Symposium Participant)

Figure 12: Percentage of comments according to themes relating to the least enjoyable aspects of the Women's House symposium

## Final Exhibition Survey Results

### Final Exhibition Survey Participants

The exhibition was attended by 154 visitors over a month. A total of N=17 participants completed surveys following their visit to the final Women’s House exhibition at the Makaan Art Gallery.

### Raising Awareness and Understanding on Feminism and Associated Issues

Sixteen participants provided answers to the statement: *The exhibition raised my awareness/understanding feminism and associated issues.* Of these, 63% (n=10) stated they strongly agreed that the Women’s House exhibition raised expectations and understanding on feminism and associated issues. Following this, 25% (n=4) stated they agreed a little the exhibition raised their awareness and understanding. Finally, 13% (n=2) responded they neither agreed nor disagreed. See Figure 13.

Figure 13: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether the Women's House exhibition raised awareness of feminism and associated issues

### Creating Conversations Around Feminism and Associated Issues

Sixteen participants provided answers to the statement: *The exhibition created conversations around feminism and associated issues?* Of these, 88% (n=14%) strongly agrees that the exhibition created conversations around feminism and associated issues. Following this, 12% (n=2) stated they agreed a little the exhibition created these conversations. See Figure 14.

Figure 14: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether the Women's House exhibition created conversations around feminism and associated issues

### Learning About Feminism and Associated Issues

Sixteen participants provided an answer to the statement: *I learned something new about feminism and associated issues.* Of these, 56% (n=9) strongly agreed they learned something new about feminism and associated issues. Following this, 31% (n=5) responded they agreed a little that they learned something new. Finally, 13% (n=2) stated they neither agreed nor disagreed they learned something new. See Figure 14.

Figure 15: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether they learned something new about feminism and associated issues from the Women's House exhibition

### Taking Part in Similar Events in Future

Sixteen participants provided answers to the statement: *I would like to take part in more things like this in future*. Of these, 94% (n=15) strongly agreed that they would like to take part in similar events in the future. Whereas, 6% (n=1) stated they agreed a little they would like to attend similar events to the Women’s House exhibition in future. See Figure 16.

Figure 16: Percentage of agreement in terms of whether participants would like to attend similar events in future

### Most Enjoyable Aspects of the Exhibition

Fourteen participants provided additional comments regarding the most enjoyable aspects of the Women’s House exhibition. According to these comments, the most enjoyable aspects of the exhibition included the exhibition as a whole and the immersive and powerful atmosphere and experience created. The most enjoyable individual scene according to the comments was the Storyteller Scene/Experience. Participants also enjoyed the experience of networking and discussion with likeminded people.

“The delivery of the work with such powerful themes.” (Exhibition Participant)

“The beautiful storyteller piece.” (Exhibition Participant)

Following this, comments suggested that participants enjoyed seeing the work in the space and the use of space, and the focus on women’s issues. Moreover, seeing and speaking to the artists was one of the most enjoyable aspect for some participants. In addition, the portrait/drawing of the women’s face and the big room scene were enjoyable elements of the exhibition.

“Loved the collaboration of the two artists.” (Exhibition Participant)

Finally, the dark room scene and the bathroom scene were considered to be the most enjoyable aspects for some participants. Furthermore, for some participants the exhibitions’ relevance to cultural and historical issues were the most enjoyable aspects. See Figure 17.

“Awareness of cultural, historical and gender issues.” (Exhibition Participant)

Figure 17: Percentage of comments according to most enjoyable elements of the Women's House exhibition?

### Suggestions for Improvements

Two participants provided additional comments for suggested improvements to the Women’s House exhibition. These suggestions included developing and extending the exhibition to other spaces such as galleries, empty shops and subways etc. Further suggestions included promoting the exhibition and work on a dedicated website and mentions in local and national media.

# Artists’ Journeys

Findings from analysis of the data gained by reflective methods from the two main artists are presented in two main parts illustrating the artists’ journeys for the duration of the Women’s House project. The first part focuses on the artists’ positions at the beginning of the Women’s House project, followed by reflections at the end of their journey, after the final exhibition. Artists’ journeys are presented in narrative format with supporting excerpts from the artists.

## Beginning of Women’s House Project

This first part focuses on the beginning of the artists’ journeys providing a snapshot of their preliminary inspirations, visions, initial challenges and learns. This is presented in four main themes relating to the artists:

1. Inspiration and visions
2. Aims and aspirations
3. Challenges and learns
4. Next steps in the journey

### Theme 1: Artists’ Inspiration and Visions

The Women’s House arts project was inspired by Judy Chicago, Women’s House 1972 [[4]](#footnote-4) and the subsequent Women’s House in Paris in 2018, [[5]](#footnote-5) which explored domesticity and issues around feminism.

“I was deeply inspired. The conversation and expression around feminism and I could connect with it, but then I felt, ‘Where are people like me in this? Where are their stories?’” (Artist)

However, whilst the artists derived their main inspiration from Chicago’s seminal works and considered the work an effective means of examining the issues of being an artist and feminist, they were also struck by an absence of both BAME and LGBTQ perspectives.

The artists’ vision was to therefore seek to understand whether anything had changed for women, in terms of the key concepts raised in Chicago’s work and from the perspectives of women, but also to consider the wider context for BAME and LGBTQ women.

“The vision for the project is to raise awareness of feminism, black feminism and gender equality. Have those conversations and empower women and enable them to think about these issues” (Artist)

Building on this, the artists also envisioned this work could act as a vehicle for raising awareness about feminism, black feminism and gender equality. The artists hoped to enable and empower women in the community to think about their role and status in the contemporary society, especially those from BAME and LGBTQ communities. This was considered an extremely important element of the project as it was highlighted that for women especially, creative expression often gets lost due to the burden of domestic work and caring responsibilities.

“Creative expression is so important for women, but it often gets lost, especially in culturally diverse communities where like women have to do certain things, like the domestic side of things.” (Artist)

### Theme 2: Artists’ Aims and Aspirations

The artists’ aims and aspirations were twofold. This included the artists’ personal aims and aspirations, in terms of their own growth and journey as an artist. In addition, this also included their aims and aspirations for working with women in the community to raise awareness of the issues of feminism and domesticity using artistic practice and inspiration as a vehicle.

#### Sub-theme 1: Artists’ Personal Aims and Aspirations

The artists’ personal aims and aspirations were to grow and develop as an artist in their own individual right. This included producing more works of art, challenging oneself to achieve full potential and thus gaining the identity of an artist. In order to achieve this, the artists believed they needed to identify their place as an artist both personally and within the wider context of feminism and intersectionality. The artists aimed to explore the issues of feminism, domesticity and intersectionality through art and artistic practice, thus aspiring to gain clarity and voice and becoming more visible as artists.

“The challenge for me is to produce more artwork, but also consider myself as an artist. We are unsure about our place as an artist. What it means is acceptance of being able to say we are an artist.” (Artist)

This involved carrying out research, learning, unpacking their own practice and determining what practice will be known for. In addition, the artists aimed to experiment with expressing the issues of feminism, domesticity and intersectionality through new and innovative artistic methods and techniques, such as installation and creating work on a larger scale.

“What I want is much more clarity and voice. I am doing a lot of research and I am learning a lot and so in that sense it has completely unpacked my own practice and made me think, ‘What do I want my practice to be known for?’” (Artist)

The artists also sought to explore how women who identify as queer or black interact with space. Key questions at this stage for the artists were:

1. What things make BAME/LGBTQ women comfortable, in terms of general physical space and emotional space?

“I want to develop we how interact with space, especially women who identify as queer or Black. What are the things that make us comfortable and uncomfortable around space in general, including physical space or emotional space?” (Artist)

1. What things make BAME LGBTQ uncomfortable, in terms of general physical space and emotional space?

Within this, the artists sought to challenge people’s perceptions of how BAME and LGBTQ women interact spatially with their surroundings both physically and on an emotional level.

#### Sub-theme 2: Aims and Aspirations for Working With Women in the Local Community

The artists aimed to actively engage with women and girls through workshops in the local community, especially BAME and LGBTQ women and girls, using the concepts of and imagery from Chicago’s work to enable dialogue and raise awareness around the issues of feminism, domesticity and art. Within this, the artists aimed to show that art is more than ‘flowers’ and ‘landscapes’ and can be about expression of self, our bodies and our lives as women and girls. Moreover, the artists aimed to highlight the ways in which art is used in a political way to uphold gender stereotypes about women and girls.

“Women were looking at things and saying, ‘This how you can express yourself.’ So, it’s not just about pretty flowers and landscapes and pretty faces, this is something that is part of our body, part of us, part of our everyday lives.” (Artist)

The workshops consisted of an initial theoretical session, during which women were encouraged to explore different ideas of what they think feminism is through discussion and listening to others. Women were provided with the opportunity to share their own stories and listen to the stories of other women, and thus challenge their personal preconceptions about women’s roles and the meaning of feminism and intersectionality.

“Opening up those conversations on feminism and talking about artwork because a lot of people have not got access to art or opportunities/space to talk about art, especially talking about how art is used in a political way. There are lots of different layers to it, including what people think feminism is.” (Artist)

Subsequently, the workshops facilitated a practical activity, which involved women participating in an arts activity, whereby they drew a map of their house and illustrated where the female space was. Afterwards, women were encouraged to creatively and theoretically develop and convert this space into an ideal or dream space. This led to discussion amongst women about converting spaces within their home for purposes such as an arts studio and garden. Women whose first language was not English were assisted by an interpreter where required so they were able to fully participate in the activity with the other women.

“One of the women drew a garden when we said draw your ideal space. She said I like gardening, and this is my ideal garden. I thought good for you. I never thought this woman who doesn’t speak English, wearing a burkha and hijab and she actually loves gardening.” (Artist)

### Theme 3: Challenges and Learns

The theme challenges and learns is presented in two main parts. The first part relates to the artists’ own challenges and learns, as part of their personal artistic journey. Whereas, the second part considers the challenges and learns working with women in the local community.

#### Sub-theme 1: Artists’ Personal Challenges and Learns

A key challenge for the artists in the preliminary stages of the Women’s House project was thinking about how a bigger space will be occupied by the work of the artists, including the fit, scale and size of the work, and the materials required to undertake the project. Moreover, within this the artists faced the additional challenge of implementing the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity and identifying how these different voices and strands of thinking could occupy the space.

“My challenge is to actually make large-scale work, big scale work. I am finding that challenging because you have to think differently. It doesn’t necessarily mean that you just scale it bigger. […] What would you use? What materials would you use? Where would it fit? And how big? And how you display it? All of these things.” (Artist)

#### Sub-theme 2: Challenges and Learns Working with Women in the Community

A key initial challenge for the artists’ facilitating workshops within the community was overcoming the perceived barriers in discussing LGBTQ issues with groups of BAME women, due to cultural differences in belief systems about sexuality and gender and perceptions that the issue may be contentious. However, following the opening-up of dialogue with local BAME women in a safe space, the artists were able to discuss, share knowledge and also learn about how concepts such as sexuality and gender interact and intersect across diverse cultural and belief systems.

“We created a safe space where we talked about LGBTQ. I was seriously I was bowled over, I thought, ‘They won’t engage. They won’t even utter the word gay or lesbian,’ but they were actually saying it. We felt we definitely broke barriers that day.” (Artist)

A further initial challenge in the delivery of workshops was the issue of time. It was felt that the initial workshops only just managed to touch the surface of feminist issues and arts practice. Therefore, there was not enough time to explore the deeper issues raised during workshop discussions and activities. In light of this, it became apparent to the artists in the early stages that the scope of the project was extremely broad and required more time and resources to explore in-depth than originally envisaged. It was felt that as the artists were uncovering so many new ideas and concepts, they required more time for reflection and processing of the additional information. Thus, permission was gained from the funders to extend the timescale from initially January to May 2019 to later in the year.

“A challenge has been interacting with people who identify as being queer and getting people to engage. Also, finding groups that are already established when there are very few in the LGBT community. Whereas, with BME groups, there are already lots of them for us to engage with. We haven’t got loads of time and money to put into outreach to find these people, so that has been really big challenge.” (Artist)

“The key challenge has been timescale. I did not realise that this would be such a big project. We both felt that for us to unpack this then to roll out and make our own work and exhibit this by 3 May was totally unrealistic. We are uncovering so many things that we need more time to reflect on, to digest and then process.” (Artist)

An additional challenge in the initial stages of the project was interacting with and gaining access to LGBTQ women, especially those who identify as queer. Finding groups that were already established was proving to be difficult due to both, a lack of such groups, in comparison to BAME women’s groups, and finite resources to fund outreach to these groups. This was reported to have resulted in a lack of parity between engagement with BAME women and LGBTQ women, with the project engaging with more BAME women groups.

### Theme 4: Next Steps…

This theme is presented in two parts. The first part focuses on the next steps for the artists in terms of their personal practice. Whereas, the second part focuses on the next steps in engagement with the community.

#### Sub-theme 1: Next Steps for the Artists

The next steps at this stage according to the artists was to make more time and space to work on developing the personal artistic side of the project and challenging own artistic practice. This involved continuing with the work already undertaken and thinking about ways of displaying the art, such as how it would look and how it would fit into the room. A key aim at this stage was narrowing down the work, ideas and concepts already undertaken to gain much more concise issue-based look at feminist through and arts lenses.

“The next step is taking some of those issues and narrowing it down to my own practice. Then developing and experimenting with my own artwork.” (Artist)

“I need to make time. The next stage is to actually make space for me, where I am just making work.” (Artist)

#### Sub-theme 2: Next Steps in Community Engagement

The next steps for the artists at this early stage of the project was to further engage with LGBTQ women. In order to reduce the parity between levels of engagement with BAME and LGBTQ women and increase the participation of LGBTQ groups in the project, it was considered that a targeted approach was required. The possibility of targeting individuals as opposed to just groups of LGBTQ women to participate in the project, in order to gain a cross-section of diverse ideas and input and identify the differences and similarities between these intersectional issues for women, was discussed.

“Find some more LGBTQ people who are willing to participate, even if it’s on an individual level rather than whole groups. So, we’ve got more cross-sectional and diverse ideas. We’ve had a lot of engagement from the BME groups, but it is not an equal balance of those who identify as being queer.” (Artist)

Moreover, as part of a reflective process, the artists planned to use their learning thus far to develop and improve the workshops. It was felt that the workshops needed to explore the deeper issues relating to art, intersectionality and feminism, including more discussion and dialogue around the complex and deeper issues raised so far through the workshops.

“I think in terms of the wider project again and workshops, thinking about the future, how can this be developed in a much deeper sense?” (Artist)

Thinking further into the future, the artists considered the possibility of rolling out workshops out as training material. Moreover, the artists were considering future projects to build upon the engagement work undertaken in the community as part of the project. The potential of developing community groups was considered to build on learning from the workshops further through more meaningful, longer-term engagement on the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity through art.

“We realised this could be rolled out as training material so maybe that is something to look at in the future.” (Artist)

## Reflecting on and Concluding the Women’s House Project

This second part focuses on the learns, challenges, impacts and next steps in the artists’ journeys at the end of the Women’s House project. This is presented in three main themes including:

1. Artists’ challenges and learns
2. Challenging artistic practices
3. Engagement with the wider community

### Theme 1: Artists’ Challenges and Learns

Artists reported a key learn from undertaking the Women’s House project was the ability to work collaboratively on an ambitious arts-based community project and exhibition. Within this, the artists learned how to incorporate findings from their action research in the community into their artistic practice, and the importance and value of research informed practice in art. However, this learning and the artists’ joint and individual journeys were not without challenges. The key challenges according to the artists were underestimations in terms of the:

1. Scale of the project
2. Scope of the project
3. Timescale of the project

#### Sub-theme 1: Underestimated the Scale of the Project

Originally the Women’s House project was planned at on much smaller scale. This included four community workshops, one artists’ networking lunch, a symposium and a final exhibition of the artists’ work. Whilst the engagement work with the wider community, including local women and the art community, was successful and predicted outcomes were met in terms of numbers, the artists felt that delivering the exhibition in the original timescale was not feasible. This was due to a greater degree of self-exploration beginning to emerge, which the artists felt considered required deeper exploration.

In order to understand the notion of feminism and Black feminism, the artists felt they needed to carry out more research, both from historical, as well as contemporary perspectives. However, whilst the artists believed their reflections and research were broadening their understanding of the issues of feminism and feminist expression, there were incidents happening at personal levels, which were deeply relevant to what the artists were looking at externally. Thus, a pattern began to emerge, and the artists came to the realisation that instead of looking for feminist narratives outside, they needed to connect with their own narratives on a personal level. It therefore became important for the artists to understand what feminism meant to them as individuals and how they defined it. This shift in perspective greatly impacted the final exhibition, which consisted of site-responsive drawing installation, individual pieces and facilitated participatory work by local women’s groups.

“A pattern began to emerge, and we realised that instead of looking for feminist narratives outside, they were within us and we needed to connect with them at personal level. It became very important to understand what feminism meant to us and how we defined it.” (Artist)

#### Sub-theme 2: Underestimations of the Scope of the Project

Both artists reported that early in the project they came to the realisation that the topic of feminism was too broad to look at in its entirety. Following numerous conversations about what feminism meant to the artists, both individually and in the wider context, and discussions on how to actually capture this as an objective within the structure for the workshops, it became apparent that the scope of the project had been underestimated. In order to overcome this challenge, the artists were required to organise their approaches and thoughts and narrow the focus of the project to specific elements. After some consideration, the focus was narrowed down to:

“Although the proposed project had a broad objective, we found it important to narrow it down to develop a more focussed approach, such as having individual focussed research into selected themes.” (Artist)

1. Gendered Space
2. Gendered Roles

Within this each artist also considered the intersecting issues of race and sexuality, class, feminist expression and domesticity.

#### Sub-theme 3: Underestimation of Project Timescale

The final key challenge, according to the artists, was an underestimation of original predicated timescales of the project. This was due to several issues, including the aforementioned scope and scale issues and personal health issues. Therefore, the decision was made to narrow down the broad objectives of the project and develop a more focused approach, such as having individual focused themes for research and exploration in artistic practice and making informed decisions about how to bring the project to a successful and meaningful fruition.

### Theme 2: Challenging Artistic Practice

Artists reported that by undertaking the Women’s House Project they challenged and expanded their individual artistic practice. Specifically, this included working on a larger scale, working collaboratively on an ambitious arts-based project and exhibition, and executing research and research-based arts practice, exploring the notion of feminism and feminist issues. It was felt the project provided intensive professional development both in terms of individual development of praxis and collaborative practice. It was considered that the both the work with the wider community and the final exhibition raised the visibility of the artists individually and as a collaboration. Moving forward, the artists have secured an exhibition at Washington Art Centre for Women’s House in 2021.

#### Sub-theme 1: Differences in Artistic Praxis

With regards to differences, Miki’s work reflected investigation into the philosophical notions of space, i.e. physical, emotional and gendered space, and looking at ways of expressing liminality through the art. Miki used drawing and mixed media abstraction. Miki’s final work explores the space in-between, capturing the non-binary state, challenging boundaries, and disrupting a position of known security.

By contrast, Padma’s investigation was based on research and personal exploration about South Asian women’s identity. This included the notion of visibility within the context of feminism and feminist expression.

#### Sub-theme 2: Similarities in Praxis

Reflections into the similarities of the artists’ works highlighted that both artists made work from an emotional place. Moreover, it was identified that both artists adopted a process-led method for making artwork, and both used materials to inform their process and well as the content of the artwork.

The overall message of the collaborative works drew upon intersections of the artists identifies, in terms of race and sexuality, giving visibility to voices that have been previously invisible. The collaborative piece used abstract language, created a space for dialogue, challenged boundaries and lends itself to individual interpretations.

“The overall message was working collaboratively drawing on intersections of our identities in terms of race and sexuality. Giving visibility to voices that have been previously invisible.” (Artist)

### Theme 2: Engagement with the Wider Community

A central aim of the Women’s House project was to raise consciousness and dialogue about issues around Feminism, intersectionality, domesticity and art. Upon reflection, the artists considered that the project achieved this aim through several engagement activities and events. It was considered that these activities and events facilitated and encouraged dialogue and created spaces where people were able to share and contribute the own ideas and thoughts of the key issues. This enabled the artists to engage with a wide range of individuals from the art and women’s sector, queer artists, professionals in various fields, academics and practitioners.

#### Sub-theme 1: Workshops

The Women’s House project also aimed to engage with and empower BAME and LGBTQ women, in terms of addressing and challenging inequality, oppression and entrenched attitudes about women's roles. The project engaged these diverse groups of women via participatory workshops.

“During the workshops, we were able to bring the various aspects of feminism to women’s awareness. We created a safe space for them to explore those aspects, through dialogue and create expression, especially using personal narratives.” (Artist)

The workshops were carefully designed with specific objectives to help women explore, express and share personal narratives in order to understand the notion of feminism from personal perspective. The artists stated they were able to introduce the various aspects of feminism to women’s awareness by using imagery from the original Women’s House by Judy Chicago as inspiration for dialogue exploring female narratives, domesticity and personal space. Extending on Chicago’s work the artists were also able to facilitate discussion on feminism from BAME and LGBTQ perspectives. Upon reflection, it was considered that the workshops created a safe space for women to explore the issues through dialogue, personal narrative and creative expression.

Furthermore, women who participated in the workshops were invited to create artwork to contribute to the final exhibition, alongside the main artists. This provided the opportunity for deeper exploration of the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity for the women. Upon reflection, the artists considered this was extremely beneficial in terms of extending learning from the workshops. It was also felt that this exercise increased women’s confidence and empowered and inspired women to create their own work of art for a public exhibition.

“The women created and presented work for the final exhibition alongside us. This has given them members great confidence to continue their engagement with us and to further develop their creativity.” (Artist)

#### Sub-theme 2: Networking Lunch

It was considered that the networking lunch with other artists helped to develop discussions and ideas, in terms of artistic work focussed on issues of feminism, from BAME and LGBTQ perspectives.

“This was a rare opportunity for artists who identify as BAME and/or LGBTQ to come together for an exchange of views, share experiences and reflect on how the issues of intersectionality affects them and their practice.” (Artist)

The lunch was facilitated by an external feminist practitioner, experienced in the field of feminism, Black feminism and intersectionality. The session was carefully designed to ensure participation on various aspects, challenges, barriers that artists from BAME and LGBTQ background experienced. It was considered that by having a small diverse group of artists this encouraged participants to engage in conversations around intersectionality in art and their own practice.

Moving forward, it was considered that whilst the networking lunch created a space for conversation, there is currently an absence of these types of spaces. Therefore, it was considered there was a need for spaces for female artists from diverse backgrounds to come together in solidarity to explore and discuss the issues of feminism and intersectionality in art.

#### Sub-theme 3: Final Exhibition

On reflection, the artists felt that the final exhibition was extremely successful, in terms of raising awareness and dialogue around issues of feminism and domesticity and art. The artists considered that the body of work they created in collaboration with local women was well received by the audience overall and both artists and art professionals. The exhibition received a high number of visitors, which provided the artists with the opportunity to create discussion around the key issues of feminism and intersectionality in art. The artists reported that the exhibition provided them with opportunities to forge new relationships and collaborations.

“We had 60 people at the opening and individually over 20 have come through to look at the exhibition, which allowed us to have in-depth conversations about feminism, domesticity and art. This has helped us to form new relationships and partnerships.” (Artist)

#### Sub-theme 4: Unexpected Development

An unexpected development of the Women’s House project was the opportunity to work with Baltic and organise a celebratory event to mark Judy Chicago’s exhibition. This included a talk and a creative workshop that resulted in making a collaborative long art piece. As the inspiration for the project, the artists felt highly fortuitous at the opportunity to present alongside Judy Chicago’s work, at one of the major contemporary art galleries in the country. It was considered that this not only raised the artists’ profiles and visibility, but also afforded them with networking opportunity to forge working relationships, which are essential in the early stages of artistic carers. This opportunity was a huge confidence boost for both artists.

“We had an opportunity to present Women’s House in the exhibition space where Judy Chicago’s work was being shown. This included a talk and a creative workshop that resulted in making a collaborative long art piece.” (Artist)

The other significant development for the artists has been an offer to showcase Women’s House exhibition at Arts Centre Washington in early 2021. Encouraged by this, the artists are currently liaising with other venues to secure more dates for the exhibition of their work.

Furthermore, the project was given editorial and press review over two months by The Crack. [[6]](#footnote-6) The exhibition was also reviewed by NARC.[[7]](#footnote-7) Finally, online coverage was provided by The Culture Vulture that published an interview by the artists. [[8]](#footnote-8)

# Conclusion

The Women’s House project expanded on the seminal works of Judy Chicago and considered BAME and LGBTQ women’s narratives in terms of the wider political, social and demographical challenges. The focus of the Women’s House project was twofold:

* Professional development for the two main artists
* Public engagement on the issues of feminism, intersectionality, domesticity and art

Evidence from this evaluation is summarised in two parts under the main aims of the Women’s House project.

## Professional Development for the Artists

At the beginning of the project, the artists sought to creatively explore the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity, and develop and challenge themselves as artists, through use unfamiliar and innovative artistic methods and techniques. Moreover, the artists sought to identify their place as an artist both personally and within the wider context of feminism and intersectionality, and gain clarity and voice and visibility as artists. Findings from reflective discussions with the main artists mapped their growth and journey throughout this project.

### Summary of Learning and Development for the Artists

The artists:

* Were able to work collaboratively on an ambitious arts-based community project and exhibition
* Learned how to incorporate findings from their action research in the community into their artistic practice
* Were able connect with their own narratives on a personal level and understand what feminism meant to them as individuals
* Were able to work on a much larger scale then they had previously
* Executed research exploring the notion of feminism and feminist issues and implemented findings into own artwork
* Raised their visibility as artists both individually and as a collaboration
* Were provided with an unexpected opportunity to present in an exhibition with Judy Chicago’s, thus raising their profiles and visibility as artists and affording networking opportunities
* Moving forward, the artists have secured an exhibition at Washington Art Centre for Women’s House in 2021

Miki’s work:

* Reflected investigation into the philosophical notions of space, i.e. physical, emotional and gendered space
* Examined ways of expressing liminality through the art
* Used drawing and mixed media abstraction
* Explores the space in-between, capturing the non-binary state, challenging boundaries, and disrupting a position of known security

Padma’s work:

* Was based on research and personal exploration about South Asian women’s identity
* Explored the notion of visibility within the context of feminism and feminist expression

### Summary of Challenges for the Artists

Key challenges for the artists included:

* Occupying the larger space effectively in the final exhibition, and considering fit, scale, size and materials
* Implementing the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity in the art and in the space for the final exhibition
* Under-estimation of the scale and scope of the project
* Under-estimation of the timescales required to complete the project outcome

## Public Engagement

A central aim of the Women’s House project was to raise consciousness and dialogue about issues around Feminism, intersectionality, domesticity and art. The project’s activities explored a spectrum of issues around Feminism, intersectionality, domesticity and art, raised consciousness about these issues and provided a platform for discussion, reflection and sharing. These dialogues were intended to inform the artists’ own practice, and also help women develop self-confidence about their own identity, recognise issues of gender oppression and find ways to self-express even within their domestic environment. Survey results and reflective discussions with the main artists highlighted the impact of the activities undertaken as part of the Women’s House project

### Impact of the Workshops

The Women’s House project engaged with diverse women via community workshops, which aimed to empower and build confidence among women and enable them to discuss and address barriers, such as inequality, oppression and entrenched attitudes about women's roles. The artists aimed to actively engage with women and girls in the local community, especially BAME and LGBTQ women and girls, using the concepts of and imagery from Chicago’s work to enable dialogue and raise awareness around the issues of feminism, domesticity and art.

#### Summary of Workshop Survey Results

Survey findings indicated that the workshops:

* Met participants expectations and generated new learning
* Provided opportunities for stimulating discussion around culture, feminism and issues affecting women
* Provided opportunities for sharing ideas and inspirations between women

Moreover, survey results highlighted:

* A need for more similar workshops in the community
* A need for longer workshops, so the issues can be explored in more depth

#### Summary of Findings from Reflective Discussions on the Workshops

According to the main artists the workshops:

* Addressed and challenged inequality, oppression and entrenched attitudes about women's roles
* Engaged with diverse groups of women
* Helped women explore, express and share personal narratives to understand feminism from personal perspective
* Explored female narratives, domesticity and personal space
* Extended on Judy Chicago’s seminal work, in terms of discussion on feminism from BAME and LGBTQ perspectives
* Created a safe space for women to explore the issues through dialogue, personal narrative and creative expression
* Increased women’s confidence and inspired them to create their own work of art
* Created a safe space to open up discussion on sexuality and gender interact and intersect across diverse cultural and belief systems.

According to the artists, the challenges of the workshops were:

* Overcoming perceived barriers in discussing LGBTQ issues with groups of BAME women, due to cultural differences in belief systems about sexuality and gender
* Lack of time during workshops to explore the key issues and concepts in-depth
* Gaining access to LGBTQ women, especially those who identify as queer.

### Impact of the Networking Lunch

The networking lunch with BAME and LGBTQ women artists, focused on raising awareness and dialogue on the issues of feminism and artistic practice. The aims of the networking lunch included facilitating conversations exploring feminism, gender equality and intersectionality, within the context of artistic practice, and exploring the barriers for BAME and LGBTQ women as artists.

#### Summary of Survey Results on of the Networking Lunch

Survey findings suggested that the networking lunch:

* Met participants expectations and the objectives
* Was informative and engaging, and participants were able to participate actively
* Provided the opportunity and space for networking between women artists
* Provided opportunities to learn about women artists and women’s art history

#### Summary of Findings from Reflective Discussions on the Impact of the Networking Lunch

According to the main artists the successes of networking lunch were:

* The creation of a space for conversation on the issues of feminism and intersectionality in art
* The artists engaging in dialogue around feminism and intersectionality in their own artistic practice
* Highlighting a need for spaces for female artists from diverse backgrounds to come together in solidarity to explore and discuss the issues of feminism and intersectionality in art

### Impact of Women’s House Symposium

Working in partnership Sangini, a sharing event for women and artists from diverse community groups was delivered as part of the Women’s House project. Lead artists as well as guest artists presented their own experiences and resulting artwork.

#### Summary of Survey Results Regarding Impact of the Symposium

Survey results indicated that the Women’s House symposium:

* Raised awareness of feminist art in an inspiring and supportive atmosphere
* Provided inspiring and creative speakers and artists
* Highlighted gender inequality in the art community and art history
* Raised awareness of feminism, intersectionality and gender equality, especially pertaining to BAME and LGBTQ issues
* Enabled networking, sharing experiences and making connections with other women and artists both locally and nationally
* Creating a space for discussion and exploration of feminist issues and intersectionality
* Opportunities for networking, sharing experiences and making connections with other women and artists
* Highlighted the lack of parity for women in art
* Highlighted an absence of spaces and opportunities to meet and discuss the issues of about feminism, intersectionality and gender equality
* Highlighted a need for similar events in the future, which create spaces for women, especially events focusing on:
* Black feminism
* Queer arts
* Queer feminist arts
* Feminist art
* Structural dismantling and changing systems
* Women focused
* Intersectionality

### Final Exhibition Impact

The final exhibition of the Women’s House project was displayed at Makaan gallery, a terraced flat, converted into a gallery. As a women’s art space, the gallery offered a domestic environment that was highly conducive to the women who do not normally take part in arts activities.

#### Summary of Survey Results on Impact of the Final Exhibition

Survey results indicated that the final exhibition:

* Raised awareness of feminism and associated issues and created conversations around these issues
* Generated new learning, in terms of the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity
* Provided an immersive and powerful atmosphere and experience
* Provided opportunities for networking and discussion with likeminded people
* Highlighted a need for similar events in the future

The most enjoyable elements of the final exhibition, according to participants were:

* The ‘Storyteller’ scene/experience
* The portrait/drawing of the women’s face
* The ‘Big room’ scene
* The ‘Dark room’ scene
* The bathroom scene
* Seeing and speaking to the artists

#### Summary of Findings from Reflective Discussions on Impact of Final Exhibition

Upon reflection the artists felt the final exhibition:

* Was extremely successful and well received by the high number of visitors
* Raised awareness and created dialogue around issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity and art
* Provided opportunities for the artists to forge new relationships and collaborations locally

# Recommendations

Based on the findings from this evaluation into Women’s House including surveys with participants and reflective discussions with the main artists, the following recommendations are suggested:

* The main artists should continue expanding their work into the issues emergent from Women’s House and exhibit the work in other venues and spaces to increase their visibility as artists and gain more audiences.
* In light of the absence of spaces for women and girls to creatively explore the issues of feminism, intersectionality and art, the artists should consider ways to expand their work engaging women in the community.
* Considering the absence of spaces for diverse female artists to come together and discuss the issues of feminism and intersectionality in art, the artists should consider ways in which they could facilitate these types of events in the future.
* In expanding their work further, the artists should consider how they could reach and engage with more LGBTQ women and artists to gain their perspectives on the issues of feminism, intersectionality and domesticity in art.

1. <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.womanhouse.net> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://eclipsetheatre.org.uk/news/1545-slate-social-women-s-house-exhibition-south-shields-thur-5-dec> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.womanhouse.net> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.monnaiedeparis.fr/en/shop/books/catalogue-exhibition-women-house-english-version> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.thecrackmagazine.com/view-editorial/6849> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://narcmagazine.com/news-womens-house/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://thesculptureculturevulture.wordpress.com/author/theculturevulturene/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)