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## REALISE your right to art aims to place art at the centre of people's lives, influencing the political debate to create a society where everyone can be creative citizens of our changing, diverse and globally-connected world.

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At its heart is the insistence that everyone has their right to participate in culture and to enjoy the arts, as enshrined in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. REALISE proposes that action must be taken to realise this right in full. As a signatory to the Declaration the British Government has a duty to make this ambitious aspiration a reality.

We have much to build upon. We live in one of the world's creative hotspots. Our cultural wealth, of which innovation, nuance and risk are defining characteristics, plays a powerful role as never before. Our artists are internationally renowned. The public interest in art, and particularly contemporary art, is unprecedented especially amongst young people. Our museums and galleries - many

of them world-class facilities - are increasingly popular amongst diversifying audiences. In schools the visual arts drive creative learning, in communities they give aspiration and imagination to regeneration. Hospitals report the positive impact of art on patients' well-being, the same is witnessed in the criminal justice system, in work with homeless people and other social contexts. Our internationally-respected creative industries including design, architecture, fashion, film and media, literature, dance and music are fed by the visual arts.

Yet the visual arts are regarded by many as peripheral to national priorities. If we can now forge a new social compact with our diverse and demanding population around this common wealth and establish the principle of a right to art as the basis for new thinking and doing, everyone will ultimately benefit, individually and collectively.

Two recent events bring this impulse into focus. The first is the successful 2012 Olympics bid. This is a rich situation within which to rehearse, with sophistication and optimism, a future cultural environment. To quote Jude Kelly, "The Olympic Movement

is one of the greatest acts of human imagination and will the world has known. At its heart is the desire for world peace and unity between sports, culture and education. No other movement has so powerfully captured the human heart for positive purpose." These high ideals, whilst jarring against the British propensity for pragmatism, represent an opportunity to renegotiate the place of culture in national thinking. In 2012 the world will focus momentarily on the UK. What will it see?

The second is the less positive situation since 7:7:05. Acres of newsprint and hours of broadcast have attempted to analyse and come to terms with these atrocities, concluding only in the confusing complexity of the issues. It is clear that over years to come, the answers to this terrible moment will be as much cultural as they are political or economic. The cultural and creative sector, through radical practices and new understanding, has an urgent and profound role to play in setting the C21 agenda.

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# The REALISE Statement

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## IMAGINE a new cultural and social landscape

As UK citizens, we have a right to housing, education and health. Shouldn't all of us also have the right to a share in the rich visual culture of the nation? Shouldn't all of us have the opportunity to flourish as visually literate and creative citizens throughout our lives?

### REALISE your right to art

We live in a compelling, complex and dynamic visual world. Art lies at the core of culture, yet, despite its power to ignite our senses and provoke our thoughts, it remains wastefully detached from the lives of too many of us.

If everyone's right to art was realised, it would:

- > Bring personal enrichment, through enjoyment, inspiration, knowledge and the challenge of the unpredictable
- > Build the vital role that artists can play in the life of the nation, of communities and of individuals
- > Increase the depth and scope of our understanding of other cultures and of one another
- > Give people the chance to develop creative skills fit for the 21st century and contribute to the growth and diversification of the UK economy and the imaginative regeneration of communities

### ART AT THE HEART OF THE SOCIETY

If we begin now to put art at the heart of society, in ten years time:

- > Everyone will have the chance to experience and enjoy the very best in art, no matter where they live
- > All children and young people will have opportunities for making art, and for sustained and high quality creative engagement with visual culture
- > Visual and design literacy will be recognised as essential to everyone's personal development, no matter their age or circumstances
- > Artists will be acknowledged as the pathfinders and visionaries that they are, generating new and challenging thinking about the present and the future
- > All new communities and regeneration schemes will have art and high quality design at their core
- > All galleries, museums and visual arts organisations will be hubs for cultural, social, creative and artistic development and learning, with programmes, commissions and collections which reflect, celebrate and examine the abundant diversity of our past and present
- > With visual culture relevant and immediate to everyone's lives, the national conversation about the unexpected and inspirational nature of art will be open to all

It's time to realise everyone's right to art.

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#### REALISE your right to art steering group

Erica Bolton, Bolton and Quinn; Maurice Davies, Museums Association; Vicky Dyer, Independent Political Consultant & VAGA Executive; Stephen Foster, John Hansard Gallery & VAGA Executive; Keith Khan, Rich Mix; Andrew Nairne, Modern Art Oxford & Chair VAGA; Sandy Nairne, National Portrait Gallery, London; Andrew Wheatley, Cabinet Gallery & VAGA Executive.

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REALISE is led and managed on behalf of VAGA by Peter Jenkinson, Cultural Broker/VAGA Associate ([peter@righttoart.com](mailto:peter@righttoart.com)) and Hilary Gresty, VAGA Director ([hilary@vaga.co.uk](mailto:hilary@vaga.co.uk))

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Commissioned artwork: Simon Tegala

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# VAGA

VAGA, The Visual Arts and Galleries Association  
The Old Village School, Witcham, Ely CB6 2LQ  
T: +44 (0) 1353 776356 F: +44 (0) 1353 775411  
E: [admin@vaga.co.uk](mailto:admin@vaga.co.uk)

[www.vaga.co.uk](http://www.vaga.co.uk)

Design by makeUP: [www.makeup-uk.net](http://www.makeup-uk.net)

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## ADD YOUR VOICE

REALISE your right to art represents a powerful and expanding alliance committed to influencing the development of policies that will lead to long term cultural, educational, social and economic change.

To endorse The REALISE Statement and to receive updates on the REALISE programme of advocacy, research, critical debate and policy development, email: [signup@righttoart.com](mailto:signup@righttoart.com)

REALISE is a cross-sector initiative led by VAGA, The Visual Arts and Galleries Association. For further information email: [realise@righttoart.com](mailto:realise@righttoart.com)



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