The creative sector has a diversity problem – are talent schemes the answer?

As a new report calls on the creative sector to aid disadvantaged youth, major studios like ustwo and Beyond launch a scheme to encourage more diversity – but is it enough?

For *Digital Arts* readers, the creative industry is comprises of those designers and illustrators on freelance commissions, and studios big and small where talent can find continual employment.

The means to go down the freelance route though depends on contacts and one's financial situation, a tricky route in the best of circumstances and one out of bounds to anyone from a working class background, especially as a graduate. Freelancing though is one way to get a studio or agency's attention – if studios can remove the financial barrier to entry, then it's a helpful step in the bringing of diversity to the creative economy.

Working towards that goal is Flipside, a talent training and development programme brought together by studios including This Place, ustwo, Beyond and Made by Many, which launched this week for its second year running.

The scheme is aimed at unemployed, underemployed young people aged 18-25 from East London, and brings a dozen young talents on to a three month training course designed to be 'experiential, practical, collaborative.'

The return of Flipside coincides with a report published today by the Centre for London which calls on London's creative and cultural employers and educators to give young Londoners a

fair shot at working in the industry.

While the report has the same London-centricity as Flipside – arguably an unhelpful factor considering the country-wide nature of these problems – it does offer solutions which in the long run are likely to help change the situation.

By calling on the creative sector to pay interns a proper salary, create a London-wide mentoring programme, and focus recruitment practices on talent instead of academic achievement, more progress can be made in the employment of creatives from a variety of backgrounds. That its advice also extends to universities and colleges instead of just businesses is a savvy move, considering education is the first hurdle for many young designers and illustrators.



Credit: iStock

Responses from the education field include those from Jeremy Till, head of Central Saint Martins and pro vice-chancellor for University of the Arts London, who's called the report "an important wake-up call for us all, in that the findings,

uncomfortable though they sometimes are, need to be taken seriously if we are to avoid the creative industries becoming exclusive bastions of privilege.”

Art institutions like CSM should also take care in not becoming bastions of international privilege too, as the lucrative chase for non-EU students across education is also a major impediment to progress.

As the report reminds us though, some cultural institutions have already recognised the sector needs to change, with employers such as the London Transport Museum and The Roundhouse introducing schemes to support young people to access jobs and training.

But more needs to be done to ensure other businesses follow their lead – preferably across the UK, not just its capital. This way London can be just one creative leader of many for the country as we head towards the post-Brexit era.

Read next: Why there’s an absence of working class people in UK’s creative and cultural sectors

https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/news/creative-business/the-creative-sector-has-a-diversity-problem-are-talent-schemes-the-answer/