

Unfinished Business

2020 – 2026

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What the artists say

CADA's Radical Acts of Creative Ageing fanzines celebrate the voices, experiences and ideas of people challenging perceptions of ageing and creativity. Each fanzine offers a personal insight into the life and practice of a creative ageing activist, exploring themes including creativity, identity, representation, agency and the possibilities of later life.

"Can you tell me what stories you've never been allowed to tell?"
Sita Brand, Storyteller

"The emphasis has been on developing and growing audiences rather than developing and growing creatives."
Stella Duffy OBE, Writer

"A radical move is needed right now... It's time for something serious, a radical shift."
Greta Mendez, Dancer and Choreographer

"I've never had a job. I'm never going to retire from it."
Sunil Gupta MBE, Photographer

"There's this huge and growing ageing population who we need to serve better in allowing their expression of their creativity."
Stella Duffy OBE, Writer

"We have to remind ourselves that... our best isn't done."
Tayo Akinbode, Composer and Musical Director

“Should we not just get rid of those stereotypes so that the radical is the norm?”
“Valuing the life that has been lived of the person who you are speaking to.”
Sophie Merriman, Producer at Meet Me at the Albany

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Essay by Dawn Cameron, Arti Prashar and Elizabeth Lynch

Introduction

This essay captures the role CADA has played in the creative ageing territory in England 2020-26 and explores its impact and legacy. It considers CADA's achievements and provocatively signposts how others might be inspired to take up the 'unfinished business' of a strategic voice in the creative ageing field.

Creative Ageing: an evolving field of practice

'I have always believed in the power of the arts to transform lives. So, it comes as no surprise to learn that art still has the power to move, inspire and thrill us as we each get older.' Baroness Joan Bakewell, Foreword, Ageing Artfully: Older People and Professional Participatory Arts in the UK, 2009

Development of the practice: What is now commonly referred to as 'creative ageing' emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States (Klimczuk, 2016) with projects led by professional artists including Susan Perlstein (founder of *Elders Share the Arts*) and Liz Lerman (founder of the *Dance Exchange*). Programmes of work in the field tended to operate in the context of public policy, the proposition being that engagement in creativity would lead to discernible positive impacts on – in particular – health and wellbeing for older people.

At about the same time, the movement emerged in Europe. In contrast to the movement in the US, initiatives related to the arts and ageing tended to be understood as being part of the community participatory arts movement.

It is argued that the term, creative ageing, came into common usage following Dr Gene Cohen's research – *The Creativity and Aging Study* (2006) – which represented a landmark in measuring the impact of community-based cultural programming on the health, mental health and social activities of adults aged over 65.

Creative ageing in the UK: Over the past 40 years many organisations have emerged delivering groundbreaking work in the creative ageing landscape[1].

[1] These include: Entelechy Arts founded by David Slater, Spare Tyre under Arti Prashar's leadership; Equal Arts; Andy Barry; Balbir Singh Dance Company; Georgia Bowers and London Bubble Theatre Company; Magic Me; Making Music and Moving Memory Dance Theatre Company, and Leeds-based The Performance Ensemble which is the UK's first ACE National Portfolio Organisation of a permanent collective of older artists creating theatre and challenging narratives about age and ageing.

In its retrospective collection of essays, *Creative Ageing: What Next?* Baring Foundation looks back at the period between 2010 and 2019, the point at which it was arguably the foremost funder of creative ageing in England. Over that period, Baring Foundation had not only invested significantly in the field but had advanced the field of creative ageing, bringing together artists, producers, practitioners and funders as well as supporting visits to centres of excellence in Tokyo, Taiwan and Scandinavia.

However, Baring Foundation hesitates to be definitive about what we mean when we refer to creative ageing, settling on the following pragmatic interpretation which extends the remit of 'creative ageing' significantly beyond participation in structured cultural programming:

We have suggested that any definition should be broad, covering all art forms and older people as audience members and as professional and non-professional creative practitioners. The entire report could have been a discussion about what constitutes 'older'. Instead in an arbitrary way we have said it is 60 and above!'
David Cutler Ageing Artfully: Older People and Professional Participatory Arts in the UK, 2009

As Baring Foundation embarked on its work in this field, the Churchill Fellowship launched its *Fellowships on Creative Ageing* and, over five years, supported a cohort of 47 Fellows to gather global insights and develop UK practice. Fellowships were delivered in partnership with Baring Foundation.

Local and global and disruptive: Despite the ebbs and flows of what is fashionable – or current – and what is not, creative ageing as a movement has sustained both in the UK and further afield. There was and is a development of a global practice, spearheaded by organisations and individuals including the Bealtaine Festival in Dublin, Dominic Campbell, Kaapeli in Finland, Anne Basting in the USA, Saitama Gold Theatre in Japan to name a few.

More recently, Baring Foundation and Kaapeli in Finland are piloting a new informal and virtual network for international creative ageing, the International Creative Ageing Network (ICAN).

Closer to home – Luminate thrives in Scotland; Re-live - a life story arts organisation based in Wales, working with under-represented communities who wish to explore and express their lived experiences through the arts; Gwanwyn, an initiative of Age Cymru, continues to run – 2026's theme being Climate.

'What connects us is the shared belief that creativity is an essential driver in creating communities that celebrate age and aging… When we step outside of our own national contexts, we expand our frame of what is possible. We begin to see that what we think are limitations are actually constructs that we have the ability and the responsibility to disrupt in order to create something more just.' Heather Ikemire, Lifetime Arts, USA. (CADA's newsletter July 2023)

Becoming CADA

In 2010 Manchester became the first UK city to achieve World Health Organization age-friendly status. It launched its *Culture Champions* programme in 2011. With funding from Baring Foundation and coordinated by Manchester Museum, it sought to support older people to become advocates for culture in their communities.

On her appointment as Director of Manchester Museum in 2018, Esme Ward worked to ensure that creative ageing was embedded into the DNA of cultural organisations across the city region. To that end, soon after taking up the role, she appointed an Age-Friendly Programme Manager as a core role.

Around the same time, Baring Foundation announced its intention to step away from funding creative ageing work. As part of this process, it issued a callout for legacy projects. Grasping the urgency of the situation, Esme and a colleague, Paul McGarry (Head of the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub), began work on a pitch to Baring Foundation for what would become CADA. Supported by consultant Phil Cave, they proposed that CADA would be regionally based but would have an England-wide remit. As Phil put it,

…let's be local and national in the rationale…you don't want to be one of those detached agencies – a strategic agency that's not rolling its sleeves up and actually working with older communities and older artists. You need to be grounded in reality.

The bid was successful and Baring Foundation invested £250,000 to provide national leadership in the field of creative ageing. Initially, the funds were held by Manchester Museum and the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub.

An Advisory Board was formed and Virginia Tandy was appointed as CADA's first Director. She began the process of registering CADA as an independent charity. Its foundational aim, ambitions and priorities were developed through a national consultation in 2020 and were as follows:

- Everyone has the right to create and participate in creative and cultural life at any age
- Challenge ageism in the arts and heritage sectors and society more widely
- Lead a fundamental rethink and reflection on ageing and creativity
- Celebrate and champion the cultural contribution of older people

Collective endeavour: Virginia Tandy describes CADA's unique contribution in its early days as its ability to commission research and convene conversation. Through its well-received reports, it was able to elevate key issues and to democratise the conversation about ageing. Amongst those publications was a scoping report about *Culture Champions* which showcased how older people in Greater Manchester had shaped local culture through engagement activities. The report contributed to CADA's ongoing exploration of how to amplify the voices of older people in conversations about the cultural life of the nation. Visionaries: A South Asian arts and ageing counter narrative captures the experiences of older South Asian artists and provides a snapshot of projects by, and for, South Asian people.

CADA was also able to introduce practitioners, policy makers and artists to current thinking in the field, nationally and globally. Despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, Virginia also began to develop national networks in Leeds, Newcastle and London. It felt to her to be a time of innovation characterised by two strong conferences which CADA produced, one of which in 2022, *Ageing Artfully Going Global,* was international and included speakers from Australia, Finland, Japan and Germany.

A provocative voice: In 2023, Virginia Tandy stepped down from her role and was replaced by Farrell Renowden who – with support and guidance from the CADA board – revisited strategic delivery informed by emerging research:

- Arts Council England's *Celebrating Age: Final Report 2023*
- CADA's research: *Visionaries: A South Asian arts and ageing counter narrative* by Arti Prashar and Elizabeth Lynch[2].

[2] Arti Prashar and Elizabeth Lynch subsequently became CADA Co-chairs in April 2023

With a new Director in post and energised by new Co-chairs and trustees who brought a wealth of artistic practice expertise, CADA revised its strategic objectives to sharpen its focus on older creatives and communities which were underrepresented and underserved. CADA developed its branding and its voice. The vision was for '*a radical change in the status quo, as we celebrate our ageing through creativity, co-production, and collective endeavour.*'

During 2023-5, Farrell succeeded in increasing CADA's online presence, expanded its networks, began the fanzine series and worked with the Trustees to recruit the RUPT Associates, a process which attracted over 80 expressions of interest and 50 applications from people of underrepresented, underserved backgrounds.

How did CADA advance the conversation about creative ageing?

For me 'radical' should look different. Shouldn't look like it did before and it should make your heart beat faster. Dominic Campbell, Co-Founder of Creative Ageing International

CADA's lifespan has been more limited than originally anticipated. Funded by Baring Foundation in 2019 to take forward its decade-long work in the field, in 2026 CADA's Trustees had to take the decision to close the charity, as a direct result of the challenging funding landscape. However, its closure creates an opportunity for others to take forward the organisation's significant achievements and areas of learning, much of which has advanced the creative ageing movement. This learning can be summarised under the following three broad themes:

Ageing and its intersections: Over the age of 55 contains multitudes...there's potentially three generations and so many needs and aspirations. David McDonagh, Flourishing Lives.

There is broad consensus from this research that the ageing population is often treated as an undifferentiated mass and that this should be avoided if we hope to develop programming and make work which appeals to and engages older people. CADA seems to have been at the forefront of a movement to explore and interrogate the ways in which ageing is experienced by different groups in society and how older artists can contribute to the narrative.

What David McDonagh refers to as 'the rupture of COVID-19 exacerbated those differences and brought pre-existing inequalities to the fore. Both Arti Prashar and Elizabeth Lynch count amongst CADA's successes its insistence on an intersectional approach to addressing issues around creative ageing:

One of the things that we have focused on since we became Co-chairs is to really look at underrepresented voices and underserved communities, to really drill down and focus on that. Elizabeth Lynch

A key illustration of this approach was Elizabeth and Arti's co-authored research into creative ageing and South Asian communities, *Visionaries: a South Asian arts and ageing counter narrative* (2022), described by Esme Ward as a report which was '*starting to enrich the conversation about ageing*'. The report, and CADA's fanzine interviews, highlight the issues of gender, class, sexuality and economic precarity on individuals' experiences of ageing and their consequent abilities to access, participate or otherwise enact their creative potential. '*Being in a conversation that matters*' is what we want, urges artist Padma Rao in *Visionaries*. Older, diverse artists want the opportunity to be included and have a voice where they can make a difference.

In 2024, CADA began to embed lived experience at every level of the organisation, by recruiting four RUPT Associates. These older, diverse artists with a socially engaged practice, supported CADA's strategy to creatively disrupt the dominant narrative around ageing and explore 'the art of the possible', helping the organisation to scope a long-term plan to increase voice, visibility and positive action.

What if we unstitched ourselves from the narrative of flourish and decline, rather recognise ourselves as we are which is a continuum of crescendo, fermata and refrain. Sama Hunt, RUPT Associate Artist.

Intersectionality is important to me [...] Using a creative methodology, RUPT aims to challenge ideas around creativity ageing/representation/inclusion. Maya Chowdhry, RUPT Associate Artist

CADA's work asserts and demonstrates that the future of creative ageing must be seen through an intersectional lens.

Putting the artist at the centre: Artists can do things that other types of interventions can't do because they catalyse thinking. They hot-wire emotions. They can galvanise action. Elizabeth Lynch

The conflation of creative ageing exclusively with health and wellbeing is limiting, especially if funding resources only support this area of work. CADA's work expressed the view that whilst creative ageing can contribute to health and wellbeing agendas, that is not its sole purpose.

One of CADA's key successes has been its insistence that the art and the artist occupy a central place in defining and refining creative ageing as a practice. The RUPT Associates have offered valuable opportunities for older artists to contribute creatively to the narrative about creative ageing and the podcasts and fanzines have given older artists a platform and a voice.

Embracing creativity and maintaining an inventive and resilient mindset as we age is valuable to everyone. Amanda Holiday, RUPT Associate Artist

Artistic practice in respect of creative ageing undoubtedly varies across art forms. David McDonagh and Colin Grant speak of older voices often being venerated in poetry and literature. Similarly, in contemporary visual arts practice it is increasingly understood that an artist's later work occupies a unique space in their creative oeuvre.

'So-called "late work" is often the most radical and the most mysterious art of its time, quite at odds with contemporary voices, and we have come to relish it for just this intransigence and non-conformity.' Sam Smiles, Curator, (The Guardian 2 September 2014)

Freed from the necessity to please critics, it is argued, older artists can appear liberated and unleashed. Others argue that later work more usually represents a steady progression from an artist's earlier work. Either way, certainly since the beginning of the 20th century, it has been understood that late work represents an important stage of an artist's creativity.

Late style for a visual artist is a reflection of maturity whereas the late style of a performing artist is seen as a "loss" of certain faculties, rather than that style being recognised as a statement of the ability to embrace the change. Artist quote in *Visionaries* Report

For dancers, their ability to embrace the impact of physical changes and to embody their gestures with a lifetime of experience is rarely recognised.

I had to do the radical move. You can't change this [body]. This is what you have... you're going to put that body back on stage. Greta Mendez, dancer and choreographer

Promoting diversity: CADA's purpose was to bring support to the creative ageing movement, not to be a delivery organisation. CADA has strategically commissioned research and convened conversations that amplify, democratise and challenge dominant narratives around ageing and creativity, not just in England but with UK and international networks.

Working with diverse artists the organisation has led the way for creative leadership by older artists from different cultural, diasporic, social and artistic backgrounds.

What were the challenges for CADA?

Creative ageing in the time of COVID-19: The impact of COVID-19 on the early development of CADA cannot be exaggerated. When Virginia Tandy saw the job advertised, she thought, *I could do that.* She was appointed, the world changed and she realised, *I don't know how to do this at all.* She was not alone. And, of course, the impacts of COVID-19 replicated existing health inequalities and this was particularly the case in respect of age[3]. Not only were older people judged to be clinically vulnerable, they were also advised to shield and to stay at home, thus increasing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Responding swiftly, CADA's first event looked at how COVID-19 had affected older people's cultural engagement and how we can move forward. The event launched CADA's 2021 research report 'Exploring older populations in England and older people's engagement with culture' which was co-produced with The Audience Agency.

Ageism: A reluctance to confront the inevitability of ageing seems to be deeply embedded in our culture, despite the fact that – all being well – ageing should be the one common experience that we all encounter. Negative attitudes to ageing can become deeply internalised.

I've been very coy about my age and it's only recently that I've 'come out' because I felt it would be very negative ...As a woman as well, it's a serious crime to grow old. Elizabeth Lynch

We live in this tension...coming from a culture where elders are revered... and living in a culture where elders are written off. Tayo Akinbode, Composer and Musical Director.

Andy Barry recounts how his work at the Royal Exchange in Manchester forced him to acknowledge and confront attitudes towards ageing. Looking back, he reflected:

Some of the work I made with the Elders' Company is the best work I've made as a Theatre Director. It stretched me and helped me to grow as an artist.

Considering the inevitability of his own ageing, he added, I've been on a journey with that in, I hope, quite a healthy way and I think it will help me age better.

[3] The Impact of COVID-19 on older people in the United Kingdom

Shifting the dial: Despite its successes, CADA was possibly ahead of the curve in terms of shifting the dial in respect of the role of the artist in creative ageing. The position remains one of good intentions rather than demonstrable action as government and funders' policy priorities currently reflect an emphasis on the sharp end of growing older, i.e. arts for people living with dementia and in care homes. CADA Directors and trustees certainly feel they gave it their best shot but agree they haven't yet seen the radical changes they believe are needed that require a holistic approach to ageing and creativity.

Over the past 18 months, however, there have been some small shifts in the wider conversation about creative arts and ageing – some directly attributable to CADA – even if these are not yet evident in the funding landscape. Looking to the future, CADA's Co-chair, Arti Prashar, sits on the steering group of Arts Council England's Creative Ageing Peer Learning Programme[4]. This initiative has helped to galvanise the creative ageing movement in conversation and action regarding best practice for individuals and organisations working in the field.

Trustees have spoken at national conferences about 'late style', representation and cultural diversity. The CADA podcasts and fanzines that reflect intersectionality have been popular on social media. The monthly CADA newsletter has over 1,200 subscribers, an expanding, engaged community of interest. The agenda is gradually moving beyond ageing and health as a narrative. This new momentum needs supporting and sustaining.

Other hopeful signs include learning arising from CADA's RUPT Associates programme, especially the in-person use of the Advent of Ageing calendar[5] to spark conversation and reflection, most recently at a symposium for Wellcome Collection's The Coming of Age. In CADA's October 2025 Radical Acts of Creative Ageing Fanzine, dancer and choreographer, Greta Mendez, issued a call to action for young people:

> ...how do you create a system, an industry, to guide young people, that when you reach my age, you're not afraid that you don't have enough money to live out the rest of your life.

The focus on supporting and foregrounding artists is also reflected in Baroness Hodge's Independent Review of Arts Council England (December 2025). Reflecting on the significant time and investment that Baring Foundation devoted to developing the practice, Virginia Tandy observed,

[4] The ACE Creative Ageing Peer Learning Programme has brought together representatives from cultural and older people organisations, health and social care, education and research, and creative practitioners to serve on their steering group.

[5] The Advent of Ageing Calendar juxtaposes close up images on its 'doors' of older bodies that open up to reveal provocative statements about ageing.

It shows that 10 years and some money – if the environment isn't right and it's not on someone's agenda – it still doesn't quite take you over the tipping point to where it becomes a real priority.

What is the unfinished business?

Much remains to be done. How can the arts and culture sector take up CADA's unfinished business? For CADA's trustees the key issues are:

Assigning more value to creative ageing: The creative ageing agenda remains a relatively unexplored area of practice in the context of organisations' broader inclusion and diversity strategies.

The arts and culture sector needs funding for professional development which supports artists and producers to emerge and re-emerge across all life stages. Phil Cave suggested that every Arts Council England art form Director should be able to speak confidently about when artists within their art forms were retreating from practice and about how individuals can access their art forms at different points during their life. He suspects the data isn't there to support this understanding. But it would be great for arts funders to make the most of their investment in the artists they have supported over many years and value their ongoing contribution to the arts ecology as they age.

Access to opportunities and financial support for older artists is as acute as it is for younger artists, especially for those who are under-represented and under-resourced, e.g. intersectional communities - LGBTQ, disabled, black, brown, working class.

Also, as the *Visionaries* Report highlights '*Artists can emerge at a later stage in life, their creative interests having been discouraged in their youth, aspirations hijacked by life experiences, lack of money or simply never having had the opportunity to learn skills and develop artistic expression*[6].'

So here I am at 82 and still working. My new solo show is called 'Aw Bless! What is old age for?' It is about ageing and ageism because it feels necessary to write this piece now, given the overwhelming feeling that me and my contemporaries are “othered” by a society that values youth much more highly than age. Cindy Oswin CADA newsletter June 2026

[6] Visionaries, Findings, page 9

Creative ageing is not synonymous with health and wellbeing: Ill health is not the defining characteristic of ageing. Engaging with creative practice as an audience member, a participant, a maker or an artist can make a life worth living, whether it prolongs it or not. Or, as Phil remarked:

Artists don't make art to make people healthy.

Advocating for diverse artistic leadership in creative ageing: *'Invisibility is the theft of representation and dignity'* Julie Graham in Nicky Clark's Acting your Age Campaign.

With the development of creative ageing practice over the last 20 years, the need for a joined-up approach to advocacy remains, to meet the challenges and the opportunities that pioneering, inclusive approaches to creative ageing bring to policies and programmes.

It will be exciting to see how creative ageing practice continues to evolve as older artists harness technology and inter-disciplinary approaches. For example Arti Prashar, Sita Brand, and Maya Chowdhry are all experimenting with immersive technology, AI and sound landscapes to communicate the experiences and stories of older people.

In 2019, as Baring Foundation's 10-year investment came to a close, Director David Cutler expressed the hope that creative ageing 2.0 would pay more attention to diversity and encourage greater participation by minority communities in response to changing demographics[7]. CADA certainly took up this particular baton, and perhaps its clearest legacy can be seen within the processes it developed to really understand the lives of older artists and creative ageing producers. Many of these stories are captured within the conversations and research it has published. CADA advocates for older artists who are activists, experimenters, radical thinkers and risk takers, teachers and mentors. Their contribution, their voices, their development, their agency are essential for a future-facing creative ageing sector to thrive.



Radical Acts of Creative Ageing Fanzines

[7] Older and Wiser, Diversity section, page 84

Epilogue: Conversation with the artist as an older man

In a conversation with Colin Grant, writer and Director of the Royal Literary Fund's WritersMosaic, Dawn Cameron asked Colin to reflect on 'creative ageing'. Colin has written seven books, many of which focus on aspects of Caribbean life.

Whilst the dial hasn't shifted yet in terms of CADA's vision, this interview with Colin is an illustration of the next chapter, the observations and conversations we are inviting the reader to join and initiate.

Listening: He recalls as a younger man being fascinated by people from the Caribbean and, in particular, by elderly Caribbean people,

...the way they carried themselves, the way they held themselves, the way they walked, the way they held their heads high, but I was also enamoured by the poetry of their language...I felt there was a gravitas in almost everything they said and I thought they were remarkable people.

He is now the Director of WritersMosaic, a project of the Royal Literary Fund which champions new writing, showcasing writers who reflect the changing reality and identity of contemporary Britain. Colin describes himself as a great listener. It's the practice of listening, he says, which gives rise to the stories he is able to tell. With age and experience, his practice has evolved,

[I seek to] complicate the narratives of the stories of black people in this country and to be confident enough to be generous, to be unguarded.

Evolution: Over time, he has learned when to pay attention to others' responses to his work,

I think I may have been a bit arrogant in the past, and I'm more inclined to keep my antennae working and pay attention to the thoughts of others and maybe fold those into the books that I write.

In what on reflection was perhaps too clumsy an attempt to stir reflections on age and ageing into our conversation, I ask Colin if he feels that that ability to take on board the thoughts and feelings of others is a characteristic which has come with age – whether with age arrogance might diminish and the writer might become less central to the narrative. Referencing Schopenhauer, he responds,

I'm not sure if it's the product of ageing. I think it's the product of wisdom...the wisdom to be humble and to recognise that every person mistakes the limits of their mind for the limits of the world.

Colin has experienced age and experience as liberating in his practice,

I think I've been looser with experience and age and I've been more unguarded in my writing. I've been less worried about upsetting authority figures as I've aged...I'm prepared, I think, with age to take more risks to my personal outcomes, realising that I have social capital to spend.

If his relationship to authority has changed over time, I wonder if the same can be said about his relationship to ambition. He tells me that his current position within the Royal Literary Fund has afforded him the opportunity to open the door to others,

I'm now a senior figure in a venerable establishment and I'm quite comfortable in that position. But my ambition is to find more people like myself to come into the organisation, so that we begin to represent the culture and the country as it truly is, and not in some mythic past ... My ambition is to be in the room.

Being in the room, though, is not an end in itself. His contributions to the conversations that take place there are also important and this can involve a careful balancing act,

...with age I have come to realise that there are people that I like and admire who are around me and supportive of me, and sometimes I'm mindful of the fact that actually I have more to lose than they do.

By way of illustration, he recounts to me the fable of the pig and the hens:

They decide they're going to get together and open an all-day restaurant selling ham and eggs, bacon and eggs all day, and it goes very well. After a while, the pig begins to think, 'Hold on! There's more jeopardy in this for me. You just have to lay the odd egg or two and you can continue to do that without much difficulty. But I'm going to have strips taken from me and there will be nothing left.'

So, that's come with age as well – realising that people are quite happy for you to go out there and do their bidding, for you to take the hits, and they'll sit comfortably and applaud from the sidelines.

Creative ageing as an optimistic process: Prior to our conversation, Colin had not been familiar with the term, *creative ageing*. I suspect he is not alone in that. It's a term which has the most currency in the subsidised creative arts sector. Having provided a brief introduction to the concept, I'm interested to learn what he understands it to mean particularly in relation to his role, both as a writer and as the Director of WritersMosaic.

A key element of his role in this endeavour, he feels, is to find ways of encouraging, celebrating and sustaining creativity whilst also giving hope for who comes next. WritersMosaic, he explains, is an intentionally multi-generational project,

I'm aware of the prejudice meted out to not so well-known writers and we have a kind of unwritten policy to embrace everybody. [...] we have several writers in their 70s writing for us...we have one or two people in their 80s. I'm always mindful when I programme events that it's nice to have a cross section of ages. And I think younger people like that...we are actively challenging the ageism that does exist in the industry.

He looks to the future with a sense of creative optimism,

One of the things I want to do as I become older is to enable an organisation like WritersMosaic to continue and for us to become more central to the culture. One of the things I'd want to say about my practice and creative ageing is to realise that I've wanted to have my cake and eat it too. I want to remain at the margins but I also want to be in the centre. I want to remain at the margins because it's more fun – there is more sense of jeopardy and daring – but I also want to be at the centre to enable people like me to remain at the margins.

Authors

Dawn Cameron is a self-employed researcher, project manager and evaluator working primarily in the creative arts and cultural sectors. She is interested in working on projects which seek to deliver social and cultural change.

Elizabeth Lynch MBE was commissioned by CADA in 2020 as co-researcher/author of Visionaries: a South Asian arts and ageing counter narrative published in 2022 and was recruited as the organisation's Co-chair with Arti Prashar in 2023.

Arti Prashar OBE: Arti was Spare Tyre's Artistic Director/CEO for 19 inspirational years. She is currently a freelance theatre maker. With Elizabeth Lynch she co-authored the Visionaries research. She became a Churchill Fellow in 2013. Arti joined Elizabeth Lynch as Co-chair of CADA in 2023.

The essay draws on CADA's achievements 2020-2026 and interviews with the following individuals:

Andy Barry is a Freelance Theatre Director and Creative Ageing Advocate. Formerly he was Associate Director and Elders Producer at Royal Exchange Theatre.

Phil Cave was engaged as a consultant in 2019 by Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Manchester Museum to help them to develop the idea of an organisation to lead age friendly culture. He served as a CADA trustee January 2021-January 2026.

Colin Grant is an author of seven books, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Director of WritersMosaic, an innovative online platform for new writing and a division of the Royal Literary Fund.

David McDonagh is Co-CEO of Flourishing Lives, which works to strengthen, support and develop the older people's arts and wellbeing sector.

Dr Virginia Tandy OBE was Director of CADA March 2020-October 2023. She has a wealth of experience in strategic cultural leadership, including Director of Culture for Manchester 2008-11.

Esme Ward is the Director of Manchester Museum. She considers the Museum's work around ageing to be core activity. Esme was one of the founding members of the CADA Advisory Board.

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International Creative Ageing Network (ICAN)
Lifetime Arts
Luminate Scotland
Making Music
Moving Memory Dance Theatre Company
Royal Exchange Theatre
Saitama Gold Theatre
The Audience Agency
Wellcome Collection

Unfinished Business



Closure Date - 18th December 2026

www.cadaengland.org

Image credits: The RUPT Associates, Sama Hunt, Amanda Holiday, Bunmi Ogunsiji, Maya Choudhry, the participants of CADA's Passion and Practice event, Sunil Gupta, Sita Brand, Greta Mendez, Tayo Akinbode, Stella Duffy, Meet Me at the Albany.

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