**LEADING UK ARTIST RACHEL GADSDEN ANNOUNCED AS KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOR ARTS ACTIVATED 2019 CONFERENCE**

**INITIAL PROGRAM LAUNCHED WITH 22 SESSIONS & EVENTS**

One of the world’s leading disability arts advocates, British artist Rachel Gadsden, has been announced as one of several high-profile international speakers at the upcoming Arts Activated 2019 Conference, Australia’s leading disability arts forum.

Ms Gadsden, who has just unveiled [a major new work in Paris commissioned by FIFA for the 2019 Women’s World Cup](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JI7hCJ_SmrY), will be the opening plenary speaker at the conference which aims to help fast track the process of making arts and culture more accessible for the 20% of Australians who live with a disability or who are Deaf.

Produced by Accessible Arts – NSW’s peak arts and disability organisation – the conference will take place at Sydney’s Waterview centre at Sydney Olympic Park from 22 – 23 August 2019 and will attract up to 200 artists, arts workers, disability advocates, researchers, policymakers and other experts from across the arts, cultural and disability sectors. Find out more at: [www.artsactivated2019.com](http://www.artsactivated2019.com)

Ms Gadsden is a visual artist, performance artist and artistic director who has been practicing for over 25 years. She creates both solo and collaborative art through, painting, performance, digital film and animation. Ms Gadsden has been the first contemporary artist appointed to Hampton Court Palace, has undertaken four major commissions for the UK Parliament, and has completed major commissions for the four most recent Paralympic Games. She is exhibited internationally and has been involved in many key international arts events and festivals as both an artist and disability arts advocate. Her work explores themes of fragility and resilience, and is informed by a life-long lung condition called retinoschisis which requires a syringe driver to inject her with medication at one-minute intervals to keep her alive. She also has visual impairment. Find out more at: [www.rachelgadsden.com](http://www.rachelgadsden.com)

Ms Gadsden: “I'm passionate about creating art. My work explores the fragilities and hopes of the human condition and I am driven to create art that contributes to bringing about social and cultural change relating to disability globally. Through my role as a disabled artist, activist, and artistic director, I facilitate the means to increase artistic and cultural opportunities for people with disability. It's becoming an increasingly important objective to break down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities being included in mainstream arts."

Conference organisers have also announced the initial program for the event. The 22 sessions and events will include a range of thought-provoking plenaries, panel discussions, workshops and networking functions.

Some of the topics to be considered include: authentic casting and representation; increasing participation in arts, culture and events by making programming and venues more accessible; boosting mainstream training opportunities for artists and arts workers with disability; reshaping the disability arts narrative; technology and design trends for universal access; and improving mainstream engagement with the work of artists with disability.

The conference is being supported by the NSW Government (via Create NSW and Destination NSW) as well as a range of local government, corporate, community and media partners. Ms Gadsen’s attendance is being supported by the British Council.

NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney The Hon. Stuart Ayres: “I’m delighted to announce the NSW Government’s support of the Arts Activated 2019 Conference. The region is home to many artists with disability who are producing incredible work and the conference allows them to spotlight their practice and connect with other people in the disability arts sector. In addition, the conferencing sector presents a significant growth opportunity for NSW, because we know that these types of events generate extra business for our restaurants, attractions and local accommodation providers. This creates more jobs and ultimately fuels the local economy – so we’re thrilled to host such an incredible event here in Western Sydney.”

Accessible Arts CEO Kerry Comerford: “Whether you’re an artist or arts worker with disability, or you’re involved in arts administration, programming, infrastructure or policy, Arts Activated is an event that’s not to be missed. Participants will come away informed and connected in new and exciting ways that will help them develop careers, audiences and creative practice.”

Registrations are available for artists, not-for-profits and other organisations, and extra discounts are available for organisations purchasing multiple registrations.

To register or find out more, go to: [www.artsactivated2019.com](http://www.artsactivated2019.com/)

To view a video about Rachel Gadsden’s new commission for the 2019 Women’s World Cup, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JI7hCJ_SmrY>

**ENDS**

**Images:** [Arts Activated 2019 Media Images](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dfa3gaicwtrz4dm/AABeiWoyEgAspJ-N_3Nts5w8a?dl=0) (captions in Comments section of each image file)

**Facebook Post:** Leading UK artist and disability arts advocate Rachel Gadsden announced as keynote speaker for Arts Activated 2019 Conference (Sydney | Aug 22-23). Initial program launched with 22 sessions & events**.** Arts Activated is Australia’s leading forum for making arts & culture more accessible for artists and audiences with disability. Get informed. Get connected. Get activated! [www.artsactivated2019.com](http://www.artsactivated2019.com)

#artsactivated2019 #accessiblearts #disabilityarts #arts #inclusion

**Twitter Post:** Leading UK artist & disability arts advocate Rachel Gadsden announced as keynote speaker for Arts Activated 2019 Conference (Sydney | Aug 22-23). Initial program launched with 22 sessions & events. Register now for Australia’s #1 disability arts forum. [www.artsactivated2019.com](http://www.artsactivated2019.com)

**Contact:** Michael Badorrek | Marketing Manager | +61 0431 594 007 | marketing@aarts.net.au

