

SHEBA ARTS CASE STUDY: WRITING PROJECT

Recognising the underrepresentation of migrant voices in literature and a desire within refugee and migrant communities in Greater Manchester for creative expression, 'Beauty is in the Heart' emerged as a collaborative effort between Sheba Arts and Commonword. This creative writing workshop series offered a welcoming space for women and non-binary people from migrant and refugee backgrounds



AUDIENCE STATISTICS

Workshops

- 57% LGBTQIA+
- 29% D/deaf and/or living with a disability or long-term illness

Sharing Event

- 58% women
- 8% non-binary
- 37% LGBTQIA+
- 66% Global Majority
- 25% D/deaf and/or living with a disability or long-term illness



"Opening up and sharing very personal parts of me to an audience [...] was healing. I am grateful for the space that was perfectly carved for us!"

"The workshops opened up the space I needed to express myself freely [...] and to share my voice."

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

16 Weekly Workshops

Led by experienced facilitators from Global Majority communities, these interactive sessions explored themes of identity, displacement, and adaptation through various writing forms. Exercises included brainstorming, group writing prompts, peer feedback, and individual writing time. The workshop structure evolved organically, adapting to participants' needs and interests, with later sessions focusing on developing complete pieces for publication.

Sharing Event

Culminating in Refugee Week, the Sheba Arts Festival 2023 provided a platform for participants to showcase their work. During the open mic event, attended by 75 people and filled with emotional readings and musical performances, participants gained valuable stage presence and connected with a wider audience.

Publication

"Beauty is in the Heart," a beautifully designed pamphlet featuring participants' final poems, will be published on 23rd March 2024, as part of Commonword Green Festival. It serves as a lasting testament to their voices and creative journeys, increasing representation of migrant voices in literature and inspiring future generations.

IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure diverse representation and meaningful participation, we actively reached out to Iranian, Kurdish, Afghan, and Arab communities in Greater Manchester. The project design itself was led by members of the refugee community, fostering a sense of ownership and creating a welcoming space for participants with similar experiences. Workshops were held at Bridge 5 Mill in Ancoats, the home of Sheba Arts, providing a comfortable and accessible environment. This community-centred approach proved crucial in building trust, understanding needs, and fostering an environment where participants felt empowered to share their stories and develop their writing skills.