

## Respectful Sharing

*Some advice on how to share experiences of honest vulnerability in a positive and respectful manner, by Fee Plumley (person with 20+ years working with creative technology and online communities, and lived experience of homelessness).*

### **With One Voice International Arts & Homelessness Summit & Festival Social Media Handles:**

Twitter & Instagram - @with1v

Facebook - @with1voice

Hashtag - #wovsummitfest

If you've ever been involved with an event in the 21st Century, you will undoubtedly be familiar with the social media/marketing team's encouragement to share everything you can about the experience online. Take photos of attendees, artworks, speakers, venues, even the coffee cups, and tag them with #alltheinfo: the event's hashtag and website, the venue location, the artist's name and handle, and the handles of anyone who isn't 'in the room' that you know would want to hear about it all. In most cases you will probably have been encouraged to be equally active in 'the backchannel' (engaging in the active conversations happening on the event's hashtag, not just broadcast-style shouting into the void), on every social media platform available. We live in the age of digital interconnection, after all. This is good, helpful, positive, important - especially for International Summits and Festivals. It helps make sure the work, learnings and discussions are shared far and wide, beyond just this moment in this physical location.

For this particular Summit and Festival, things are a little bit different. We still want you to share far and wide, we just need you to think a little bit more before you do.

The Inaugural International Arts & Homelessness Summit & Festival is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the stark realities of homelessness, and the myriad of powerful ways in which the arts can transform lives. The content of both Summit and Festival has been designed with, by, and for people with lived experience of homelessness, and the people and services who support them. 50% of tickets to the Summit have been given for free to people with lived experience of homelessness, and almost all the Festival events are free for everyone. It stands to reason that both the Summit and Festival, and the social media conversations around them, will attract people who are now, or previously have been, homeless.

There's also another audience: people who have no idea what homelessness is like.

Being homeless comes with a whole range of vulnerabilities, which is not to say that any of us are vulnerable *right at this moment*, just that there may be topics or issues that can be triggering. Part of those triggers come about because of misinformation spread by mainstream media outlets, and others, who have their own agendas.

There are a lot of stereotypes applied to homeless people which you need to understand and be compassionate about in order to act respectfully on our behalf. No homeless person chooses to be homeless. Not every homeless person lives, or has lived, on the streets. Not every homeless person begs, or has begged. Not every homeless person has access to support services, or people who can help them.

You won't necessarily know that any of the people you speak with - from speakers to artists, delegates to audiences - have lived experience, and we do not expect you to ask. Some people will tell you themselves - in fact some will tell you very personal, painful, and beautiful stories about their own experiences. Some of them will want their stories to be shared to add to the conversation. And some won't.

We know that you wouldn't be here if you had bad intentions. However we all know that the same cannot be said about 'the internet in general'. Please therefore ask yourself a few questions before every post you make or share:

1. Will my post add to the conversation around homelessness in a positive manner? If not, don't post it - or if you have to, at least find a positive way to address the issue. There's enough negativity in the world, no one needs more.
2. Will my post cause any form of potential harm or risk to the people it involves? If so, *definitely* don't post it. Certainly avoid location tagging unless it's an event venue, or the person actively asks you to share it.
3. If I am documenting individuals at the event, do I have their permission? If so, am I correctly crediting them? Do they want to be tagged so they are involved with further online conversations, or would they rather their story/presence was included anonymously?
4. If I am sharing a speaker or artwork, am I correctly crediting the makers and/or performers *and* their support services (if they have them)? Do I need their permission to do so?
5. If I am engaging with the online conversation threads and see negativity there, am I tempted to counter the arguments or disagreements taking place? If so, have I considered that they might just be trolls and therefore a waste of my valuable energies? If not, how can my interjection/opinion bring positivity and a constructive voice to the debate? If you're angry, don't reply/interject at all; trolls feed on winding you up - starve them! Take a deep breath and move on to a more positive action/discussion. Or just put your device away and get back to the nice, friendly, honestly vulnerable people in the physical space in front of you.

Most vulnerable people just want to be seen and heard, so the chances are they will accept your generous offer of amplifying their voices. But even if their story is amazing and you feel it needs to be shared online, it is *their* story, and so *their* decision for that story to be shared, or not.

If you do happen to see anyone who is distressed, go and tell one of the production team - they are all truly beautiful humans, and they are there to help. Remember there are a great deal of people attending who are trained and experienced in providing specialist support, and there are safe, quiet spaces available for that to happen on-site. You need only to indicate a pathway to that support, not 'solve' anything yourself.

Your responsibility here is only to provide your personal responses to the work and conversations you have during the events, and do whatever you can to make sure that amazing work reaches as many people as possible. You are warmly invited to help us collectively change the conversation, and change lives.

Thank you for being here, for listening to our stories, and for respectfully sharing our world.