

## **An ethical policy for Action Hero**

### **What Do We Believe In.**

Action Hero is Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse. This means the values of Gemma and James (we, us) are the values of Action Hero.

We believe in respecting people and treating them with kindness and humanity. We commit to holding equality at the centre of our practice (and beyond) as an active work ethic that needs our constant attention.

We want to be upfront and transparent, and to be honest and open with our time and resources. We will advocate for artists, and where we have access to decision-making spaces and others do not, we will invite others in to advocate for themselves. We want to emphasise generosity and cooperation as the foundations of success.

We believe in art and performance, for its own sake. We believe in the process and practice of art-making and its power in the wider world. We believe art makes us human. Nothing is more important than the work.

The mission of Action Hero is to make the work of Action Hero. We take it very seriously and invest our whole selves into the pursuit of making it, showing it, sharing it and creating it. It will never be 'just a job' for us. If it ever becomes this, we will stop and do something else.

We believe in integrity. We won't sell our work to people (or organizations) who don't value it. We won't put our work in contexts which undermine it, or undermine our personal politics. We don't believe in doing things we don't believe in.

We do this for a living. We believe in artists being able to sustain livelihoods from their work if they are working within an industry which affords a living to non-artists whose livelihood is dependent on the work we, as artists, produce. We don't think everyone else in the arts should get paid except the artists.

We work hard. We are diligent. We do not take things for granted.

We believe in a broad understanding of what work can look like and what kinds of work are valued

We believe in communities and networks, and think that institutions are just one part of those communities. We think people are more important than buildings.

## **What Do We Do.**

The values we hold as people have to translate into actions in the everyday life of Action Hero.

1. We will create as little waste as we can as a result of our work. We will recycle any waste we create or find new ways for things to be reused.

We have to travel for our work, and often this means flying. If there is a viable alternative we will research and suggest it to people we work with.

We will minimize air freight by asking for venues to locally source materials for our work.

We will make long journeys count by making efforts to meet local artists, artist communities and other venues when we travel.

2. We will spend Action Hero's money in independent businesses where we can.

We will use the Bristol £ in order to support the local economy where we live.

We will not take money from sources whose objectives run counter to our own.

We will pay ourselves an equal salary, irrespective of what work is done by each of us. We will value all the work that gets done for the company equally, and will not subscribe to gendered roles around that work and its subsequent value.

We will always be happy to contribute to the society we live in via fair taxation on the money we earn through our work. We believe in the importance of paying your share.

We will pay the people we collaborate with for their work, & we will always pay above industry minimums. We do not believe in a system where the salaried careers of those who facilitate art work is built on the work of artists and freelancers who are not properly paid, and will not support it by working in, or contributing to, conditions that perpetuate those circumstances.

We will be transparent about the money we have, and where we have received public money we will take extra care with how it is spent. We take the responsibility that comes with public money very seriously.

3. We won't use the language and behaviours of capital to sell/promote /develop /represent our work.

We will not support the commodification of art and creativity by engaging in processes that undermines the work we make and believe in.

We want to tell people about our work and we want them to come. We don't want to create a brand, or strategise in a way that commodifies behaviours we would naturally engage in to communicate with our audiences.

We accept our work is part of an art market, whether we like it or not. We will not create work for the market.

We will not sell our work to corporate entities who wish to associate themselves with us in order to gain kudos for themselves or their product. What they wish to purchase is not for sale.

We will resist pressure to run our 'business' in ways that others deem 'appropriate'. We'll do it our way. There's more than one way to skin a cat.

Action Hero's primary function is to facilitate the art practice of Gemma & James. We will not seek to perpetuate the existence of the company for its own sake.

4. We will be active in the communities that support us, so we can support others within those communities.

We will understand other kinds of value, and will give our time generously to artist-led structures that support independence and alternative economies.

We will use our position to advocate vigourously for artists. We will do this in several ways, including: by recommending artists whose work we believe in to colleagues in the networks we are part of; by advocating for the role of artists in strategic decision making at the highest level; by speaking publically on issues around pay and conditions for independent artists.

We will prioritise Gemma as a public representative for Action Hero over James, as a way of addressing gender imbalance in the industry.

We will work to use our positions of privilege to make space for artists who are underrepresented in our field, and understand that this will need our constant attention to ensure that by attempting to make space, we are not, in fact, taking up more.

We operate an "extreme flexi working" policy. It's nobody's business how or when we and our collaborators work. As long as the work gets done, as long as the work is our best, as long as we do it with heart- that's what matters.

5. We will treat each other with kindness, respect and as an equal. This is the foundation of our creative partnership. We will extend this philosophy to everyone we work and collaborate with.

We believe in ambition. We do not believe that to be better we have to be bigger.

We will be stubborn where necessary, but we will listen to good advice.

We will ask for help when we need it.

If either one of us no longer wishes to continue, Action Hero will cease to exist.

We will not expect others to believe in the things we do, nor do we intend our decisions or actions to be a reflection on or judgment of the decisions and actions of others.

#### **How do we live with ourselves**

Anything here mentioned can be renegotiated between us, but must be properly discussed and agreed by both parties. The policy can be added to at anytime.

We will hold each other accountable, but will accept that we will make mistakes. These mistakes will be seen not as a sign of weakness, hypocrisy or failure, but of proof of the challenges of trying to live and work in an ethical way whilst existing in a world that does not exist by the same ethics. That we are acting in the face of this challenge should be encouraged and celebrated.

We will share this document with anyone who asks to see it.

Gemma Paintin & James Stenhouse.

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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