

**QueerAF (Arts Festival) Milton Keynes 21st-
24th November 2024 Open Call Submissions
Process**



**BLACK SHEEP
COLLECTIVE**



QAF MK is a multi-disciplinary, multi-day arts event, designed to investigate and celebrate the lived experiences, narratives and creativity of queer and/or black people and women. The festival is a curated programme of performances, disruptions, manifestations and expressions that we have either commissioned or co-developed and co-conspired with artists, to mount.

Please find the guidelines for submitting art works/projects below.

As QAF MK explores beyond the mainstream thresholds of Queer, we welcome submissions that offer audiences new expressions; manifestations and presentations of queer content/voiced art works. Our [Queer Poetics](#) explains our positionality to Queer. This is the perspective that all submissions will be reviewed from.

We seek out and actively welcome, submissions from queer/black/women artists who want to take audiences beyond the normative; somewhere else; somewhere *Other*-art that takes ordinary spaces, and critically transforms, interrupts and reveals them to be, extraordinary places, where audiences can question, explore, discover and celebrate.

Programme Approach

The word-chain below, is designed to show our thinking around queer and Place (Milton Keynes), and how this informs our programming approach. Submitting Artists are welcome to engage with and respond to, this guiding principle of QueerAF.

We are committed to 80% of the festival programme being 'homegrown' thus, works are selected from those created and or established in the city of Milton Keynes. The remaining 20% includes visiting artists and companies, works we have seen elsewhere and want to share, and selected pieces from across the UK queer arts scene.

Submission Process

The submission period is open from 1st April – 30th June 2024.

1. What do you want to tell us about yourself and your work (500 words max).
2. Include Artist(s)/Company CV/Portfolio (2 pages max).
3. The Proposal – via written, visual, multi-media methods, etc- please introduce your artwork. (1000 words max for written submissions and any accompanying text to visual proposals).
4. Get it to us! Make sure we have everything before the deadline. We aim to respond to all submissions within 14 days of the period closing.

We do not accept Scripts or Literary/Publishing based proposals unless they are already in production. All submissions for Events/Immersive Experiences, must have at least 50% of core costs secured before submitting a proposal and a budget should be included.

If you are a venue or organisation interested in collaborating during the festival, please email Directors@blacksheepcollective.co.uk to arrange a conversation.

Proposals can be sent to:
qaf@blacksheepcollective.co.uk or

Black Sheep Collective, Stantonbury Theatre, Milton Keynes, MK14 6BN.



Milton Keynes – 'Different by Design' – Essentially-Different – Queering the City



Black Sheep Collective's Queer Poetics

Black Sheep explores Queer in the widest sense. We believe in the 'observational advantages' of being Othered, queering the notion that being 'outside' (of a system/structure) is perceived solely as 'disadvantage'. As an organisation, we've often been described by the cliché 'breaking the mould', however we argue that we were never in the mould to begin with. It is from this unstable site, located elsewhere, outside, that Black Sheep plays, makes-trouble, responds to, and questions, a world full of unfinished projects.

We believe the 'essential differences' between and amongst us, are sites of power, progress, and potential; portals to a Queer Energy so to speak. We value works being critically led by queer people and voices, as well as mounting work that has queer content, connections, and/or meanings. Our lens is focused on the ways and modes in which, Queer Performance can effect change, particularly with regards to how Humans think, feel and act about themselves and the World.

We acknowledge the historical trajectory of Queer & Performance as being present in non-confirmatory, anti-normative, resisting, challenging and anti-institutionalised movements. Indeed, both Queer and Performance share an archive of trauma, endurance, creation, and deconstruction etc. Both paradigms arguably have caused systemic shifts and each have many historical points where scholars argue a Turn has been initiated. Both practically and theoretically.

Paradoxically Queer Performance, even more so in recent years, has been theoretically concentrated in the institute of academia. Yet, current Queer Theory does not manifest itself quite so easily as other academic fields. Tethered to Social Action, the paradigm has a unique ability to infold itself back to/on the counter-ways above, thus resisting the thresholds of regulations and traditions of the Institute. Here, Queer also aligns with an emerging discourse in Posthumanism. Transcending time and space, back and forth, near and far, here, there, everywhere and nowhere- all at once!

Queer Performance

The more we ask of Queer-something, the more we find out. Queer Performance can constantly shift and change; we are forever chasing Queer- trying to locate it, signify it, mark it, but this is a failed project. Queer cannot be objectively identified; it plays with us just as much as we play and explore it.

What is the future of Queer Performance?

Queer Performance, for us, is (and will always be) a question. Not a statement or claim; yet infinite and never complete. Queer tethers itself to both theory and action, it transcends time and space. In this way, Black Sheep's Queer Poetics are an infolding, reflexive project- that moves and shifts, almost autonomously, relegating the complicated tasks of making hard line definitions, categorisations and/or labels, that are striving to dominate discourse around Identity. By this we mean, if a shift in focus is moved from the Performance (conscious intent) to the Performativity (unconscious reaction), we can understand better how we feel, think and act about ourselves and the world.

Maybe, the more appropriate questions are:

What is Queer about Performance?

How do we recognise Queer in Performance?

Where does Queer Performance tether itself to wider contexts? (Class, Race, Gender, Socio-economic position, etc.).