



## 100 MASTERS

## ENDLESS INSPIRATION FOR EVERYONE

### INTERVIEW WITH LIAM SMYTH

photo by: Lejla Kratina

100 Masters is one of the winners of the EYA (European Youth Awards) in the category of the Open Innovation.

It is an online platform where masters-experts in their field can serve as an inspiration for the beginners-pioneers.

Liam Smyth is Creative Producer and Community Manager of the Creative Black Country.

*Could you please describe in a few sentences what is your project about?*

**LIAM SMYTH:** I work for Creative Black Country, an organization part of the Art Council of England which has identified 21 areas of the UK that have a low engagement in the fine arts. The reason why our area is called the Black Country is that it was the birthplace of the industrial revolution. After the deindustrialization, the area has been affected by a high level of unemployment. We wanted to raise awareness on civic participation, creativity, and encourage people to connect with themselves. The aim of 100 Masters campaign is to profile the experts of today and inspire the pioneers of tomorrow. We worked in collaboration with local newspapers to offer the nomination process, for example using the Augmented Reality in a non-commercial way. It was a very successful campaign with 70.000 readerships. We were very keen to choose people who were representatives of the area, in respect of the demographics (half women, half men), ethnicity, disabilities. More than 700 people applied and we have shortlisted 100 of them.

### *Why do you think this project is important?*

**LIAM SMYTH:** The challenges of the Black Country are not unique for the area. Particularly if we look at the challenges of young generations. We feel in quite rough terms that young people are given an unfair deal. Modernity has failed to replace traditional employment. What we can do now is to connect the 100 masters with young people in real life. We want to work with universities and colleges to offer masterclasses, workshops, talks, informal mentorships and to give the opportunity to put into practice intergeneration's connections as well.

### *How are the 100 masters presenting to the audience their case stories? (events, online, activities etc?)*

**LIAM SMYTH:** Thanks to the collaboration with local newspapers we were able to publish the personal stories of the 100 masters. We have also experimented the Augmented Reality technology to present the masters' case stories. Every picture can be a trigger that leads to a link to an article or a video. We exported this technology to Indonesia, where the local people have framed it in a funny way: for example, the difference between the Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality is to bring yourself into the ghosts' world instead of placing yourself into this world.

### *How do you measure the impact of your initiative?*

**LIAM SMYTH:** We are looking at quantitative and quantitative figures. On social media, our most watched video had 9,4 million views; on Facebook, we have 70.000 followers. These numbers are important, especially when we are looking for new investments. But we consider also the impact of personal stories around the world, for example, one female artisan moved to Australia to work and deliver her workshops.

### *How have you shortlisted the 100 masters?*

**LIAM SMYTH:** First of all we wanted that all the kind of people were represented in the selection and we learned that, at least in the UK, the term "masters" was quite divisive and male-dominated. But we wanted women and minorities to be shortlisted as well. We have involved communities' ambassadors from different sectors to be part of the jury. We wanted people who achieved extraordinary goals in their professional life or who have broken down the barriers of their own lives, for example people with disabilities.



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*What are your plans for the future? Are you planning to organize events to connect 100 masters with the audience to let them interact with each other?*

**LIAM SMYTH:** Until now we developed the 100 masters only in the Black Country in the UK. We did also a small pilot project in Indonesia and now we have submitted it for applications in Asia and Europe. We have partners in Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria, France, and Indonesia. The end goal is to create a toolkit so that every community can organize its own 100 Masters without our support.

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Dalbier Singh Rattan is one of the most respected Tabla player – an Indian traditional percussion consisting of a pair of drums, used in traditional and folk music. When he's not playing he dedicates his time to teach how to play the Indian instrument and drum to the students of Sandwell.

Thanks to the 100 Masters project he joined the tour of two famous English artists. We had the chance to talk to him and ask him a questions about his experience.

**DALBIER SINGH RATTAN:** It has been a fantastic experience that brought life to me and to my community, giving publicity to my work as an artist. I teach music, I am a Tabla player. I had the possibility to join the tour in the UK with Liam Gallagher, former singer of the Oasis and Ian Brown, frontman of the rock band Stone Roses. I have learned a lot, I was already a big fan of them and was an honour for me to play with them.

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