

THE FILM CULT

NO ONE BELONGS HERE

MORE YOU THAN

Welcome to the cult,

Thank you for showing an interest in helping us build a healthy, accessible and sustainable alternative to destructive screen culture! Everyone's capacity to get involved is different and all forms of support mean the world to us.

Some ways you can support us:

- Volunteering some of your free time
- Financial support through donations
- Resources like film equipment or a meeting space
- Solidarity (if you are a similar organisation or group)
- Sharing skills with the group

This is a labour of love from a deep need for a diverse and healthy alternative to contemporary industry filmmaking. We are just at the beginning of our story and welcome anyone who wishes to be a part of it.

I have personally struggled with the film industry, I have struggled with my physical and mental health to the point where I had to question whether there was a space for me in the industry. After realising I am not alone and that this is the majority experience, I'm now passionate that we ought to take up a space of our own. The Film Cult can help us make that space.

This handbook gives an overview of The Film Cult, our values, structure, principles, goals and all the ways you can get involved.

Here's to a better world of filmmaking,
Cult Member Rowen

ATLAS

Mission Statement 4

Central Idea

Projects 6

Equipment and Costume Share

Fair Film Project

Overseers / Admin

Vibe Guardians / Wellbeing

Brain Washing Department / Outreach

How We Organise 10

How We Work

Cult Assemblies / Spokescouncil

Working Groups

Meeting Roles

Consensus Decision Making 16

Consensus

Participation

Stages of Consensus

Testing for Consensus

Vibe Guardians 22

Workload

Moving On

Conflict Procedure 24

Conflict Resolution Principles

The Green Lens

Preventing Conflict

Resolution Steps

Culture, Values and Principles 30

Links and Resources 35



MISSION STATEMENT

CENTRAL IDEA

We have been misled by an industry convincing us that exclusivity and suffering are required features of our art form. Industry has glorified the mistreatment of our bodies, our relationships and our minds.

We are passionate that **we ought to take up an alternative space of our own, to practice a different way of filmmaking.**

We exist for the many denied opportunities in the film industry and those struggling to maintain life within it.

We are calling out the current toxic reality of film work while dreaming, building and maintaining a real-world alternative. Our projects challenge how we access the tools, the knowledge, the capacity and the community needed to create films.

Through **accessible, diverse and healthy** filmmaking we can nurture the voices and stories previously locked out from this medium, evolve the art form and reclaim our right to culture.

We have come together to build a bright alternative to the current filmmaking practice.

Join us on this ambition.

PROJECTS

EQUIPMENT AND COSTUME SHARE

We have pooled together film making equipment and costumes for our community to use, and we charge only the price of maintaining the project (extremely little)!

This resource supports access for those on lower incomes, students, young people, independent filmmakers and a whole community finally breaking down the expensive barrier to this art-forms full breadth of tools.

If you're interested in getting to know film equipment, building orders for our community, learning maintenance skills and meeting local filmmakers, this could be a good fit for you!



FAIR FILM PROJECT

Films do not need to be made under the current practice of overwork, stress and exclusivity. Instead, we see it as necessary that they are made in a healthy and sustainable way for the art form to become universally accessible.

The more people we have practising the art form, the more diverse, insightful and transformative films will be! The happier our filmmakers will be also!

This project will allow us to create our own definition of what filmmaking ought to look like, and to then put that to the test on productions, to learn from, design and redesign a structure we can all benefit from.





OVERSEERS / ADMIN

For the group to operate smoothly there are some administrative tasks that need to be maintained, such as finances, looking after volunteers, funding applications, emails etc.

These offer a good opportunity to learn skills the corporate overlords love, with a supportive group around you.

While these tasks are not as glamorous as the others they are essential to the groups operation. All help is appreciated!

VIBE GUARDIANS / WELLBEING

The Vibe Guardians reflect on the internal practices and culture of The Film Cult. Their role is the protection of cult members physical, emotional and mental needs, allowing everyone to properly participate in the group.

This is for anyone with an interest in making our group healthy and accessible.

BRAIN WASHING DEPARTMENT / OUTREACH



We want The Film Cult to creatively communicate, share and celebrate our activities with current cultists as well as reaching those not yet aware of us.

Good for anyone interested in social media, arts, meeting new people / groups / companies, or with some creative outreach ideas!

HOW WE ORGANISE

HOW WE WORK

We work towards our shared vision through emergent programmes. These are projects which emerge from the group because we believe they will get us closer to our alternative filmmaking space.

Projects we take on will lay the foundation for a stronger group and larger projects in the future, whether they are entirely successful or not.





CULT ASSEMBLIES / SPOKESCOUNCIL

We hold a monthly assembly to address concerns, proposals and to allow for cross-working-group decisions to be made. At least one spokesperson (representative) from each working group needs to attend. Decisions are made through consensus across a series of spokescouncil meetings.

Any member or working group can submit a proposal, concern or idea to be discussed at the spokescouncil.

Changes to our systems, ideas for existing projects or even entirely new projects can be proposed at spokescouncils.

WORKING GROUPS

Most of our actions are made in smaller working groups focused around a specific project. Their smaller size allows for easier communication, organising and closer relationships between members. Working groups decide when to meet, what to discuss etc. and are organised autonomously by those inside it and not by a higher power.



Distribute work as evenly as possible

Don't let a few people do everything. Empower others to contribute as much as possible!

Roles not tasks

Try to distribute entire roles/realms not just individual tasks. This gives people some autonomy and ability to make decisions which is more empowering.

Set people up for success

Make things specific, clear, enough instruction/background info, not too many options, etc. Make it easy for people to say 'Yes!'.

Passion not obligation

Don't guilt/shame people into tasks. Follow passion and excitement. There are people that would love to do every task/role, we just need to find them.

Follow up

We're all very busy, and we sometimes need a reminder to actually follow through on our best intentions. Following up with people can feel like nagging but is true support.

Sometimes not everything needs to get done right away

Be realistic about capacity. It's better to do less for longer rather than burn yourself or others out.

MEETING ROLES

FACILITATOR

- Collects agenda items
- Keeps the meeting focused on one issue at a time
- Makes sure everyone can be involved in the discussion
- Summarises
- Asks for agreement on proposals

The Facilitator role should rotate between meetings, facilitators should make their biases known.

TIME KEEPER

- Keeps everyone aware of the passage of time in relation to decision making

Take the time to make a good decision now to save wasting time revisiting a bad one later.

SCRIBE

- Publicly writes down points, concerns and ideas during discussions
- Keeps notes of discussions and decisions
- Creates notes to be sent to anyone unable to attend or for newcomers to the cult

COORDINATOR

- Keeps track of what needs to be done following the meeting
- Keeps track of who is doing it and when

VIBE GUARDIANS

- Ensures meetings are accessible
- Facilitates conflicts in line with our principles
- Provide positive feedback when the group is working well
- Diffusing tensions
- Watches the emotional atmosphere

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

CONSENSUS

Consensus decision making is a commitment to find solutions that are acceptable to all.

Instead of voting for a decision, consensus is about finding common ground with decisions reached in a dialogue between equals, who take each other seriously and who recognise each others equal rights and needs.

No decision is made against the expressed will of an individual or a minority. Instead the group endeavours to adapt to all its members' needs.



PARTICIPATION

- ★ **Be willing to work towards the solution that's best for everyone,** not just what's best for you. Be flexible and willing to give up your favourite idea if there's another solution that meets your core needs.
- ★ **Help to create a respectful and trusting atmosphere.** Make space for everyone to express their ideas and opinions, and remember we all have different needs, values and ways of communicating.
- ★ **Be open and honest about the reasons for your view-points,** and if possible express your concerns early on in the process so that they can be taken into account in any proposals.
- ★ **Listen actively to what people are trying to say.** Make an effort to understand someones position and their underlying needs, concerns and emotions. If you don't understand try to say so.
- ★ **Don't be afraid of disagreement and conflict.** Differences of opinion are natural and we need to know what they are in order to come up with a good decision. Easily reached consensus may cover up the fact that some people don't feel safe or confident enough to express their disagreements.



STAGES OF CONSENSUS

STAGE 1: INTRODUCE OR CLARIFY THE ISSUE OR IDEA

Share background information. Work out the remit of the discussion - i.e. what questions do you need to decide about now?

STAGE 2: OPEN OUT THE DISCUSSION

Make space for everyone to share their needs and opinions before launching into trying to solve the problem. If solutions come up already, you could hear them briefly then park them for the next stage.

STAGE 3: EXPLORE IDEAS IN A BROAD DISCUSSION

Come up with lots of different ways forward. Explore the pros and cons. Identify key concerns, needs and objectives.



STAGE 4: FORM A PROPOSAL

Look for a solution that meets everyone's most important needs. This might involve weaving together elements of different ideas.

STAGE 5: AMEND THE PROPOSAL

Look for changes that make the proposal even stronger.

STAGE 6: TEST FOR CONSENSUS

Clearly state the proposal and check whether there is real agreement. We ask in the following order:

- Any **VITOS?**
- Any **STAND ASIDES?**
- Any **RESERVATIONS?**
- Do we have **AGREEMENT?**

If we have too many stand asides or reservation we go back a stage and amend the proposal or create a new one.

STAGE 7: WORK OUT HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE DECISION

Work out what needs to happen, by when and by who.

TESTING FOR CONSENSUS

When testing for consensus you will be asked to express one of the following:



RESERVATIONS



Having some reservations that others should acknowledge, but being willing to still decide for the proposal.



STAND ASIDE



You want to object, but not veto the proposal. This may mean you won't help to implement the decision, but you are willing for the group to go ahead with it. You might stand aside because you disagree with the proposal, or you might like the decision but be unable to support it because you don't have the time or energy.

The group may be happy to accept the stand aside and go ahead, or they may work on a new proposal. A critical question is whether the proposal requires everyone to implement it.



VITO

Asking for a vito is communicating that you will need to leave the group if the decision goes ahead.

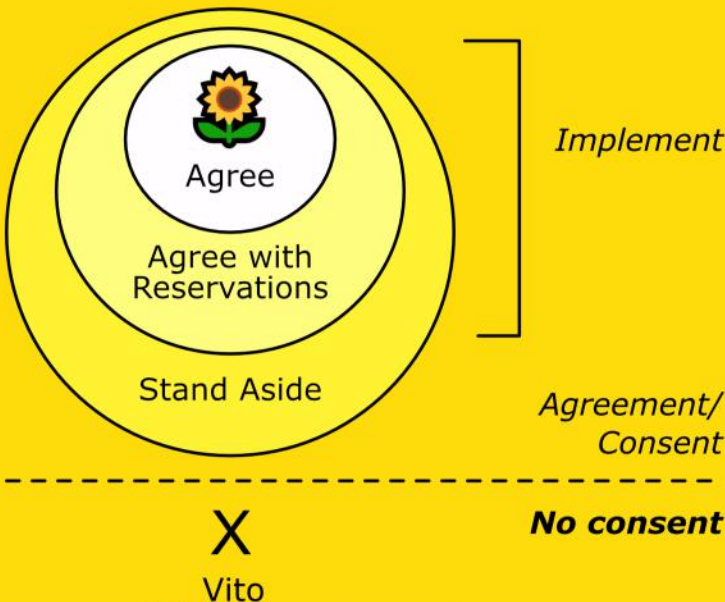
If there is a vito, we need a new proposal.

In cases where the vito stems from a fundamental disagreement with the aims of the group it might be more appropriate for the individual to leave.



AGREEMENT

Supporting the proposal and being willing to implement it.



VIBE GUARDIANS

The Vibe Guardians working group exists to take stock of the environment and culture currently being practised by The Film Cult. They protect cult members physical, emotional and mental needs so that everyone can contribute to their best ability.

The Vibe Guardians are an internal eye reflecting on how the group functions.

The Vibe Guardian working group may also be researching and discussing best practices The Film Cult can adopt and implement.



WORKLOAD AND OVERWHELM

Never compromise health for cult activities. If you are struggling with your responsibilities consider:

- Delegating the work to someone else
- Contacting a vibe guardian
- Sharing your role with another or multiple members
- Taking a temporary break and getting cover
- Stepping down from your role, for now, so someone else can take on the role

You commit your time and energy on your own terms.

MOVING ON

When you move on from the group we ask that you pass on the information required to do your role for the next person.

CONFLICT PROCEDURE

We want to do conflict well, for tensions between members to be healthy and contribute to personal and collective growth. We build a culture of robust debate, honesty, and care.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRINCIPLES

- ★ We engage to the best of our ability to resolve conflict, and seek help when needed.
- ★ Conflicts are resolved as close as possible to the people involved. Beginning with the people directly involved, and expanded from there as needed.
- ★ We have mutual responsibility and care for each other.
- ★ We act in good faith and work to be constructive, empathetic, and honest.
- ★ We resolve conflicts with both our individual needs and the needs of the collective in mind.

WE VIEW EACH OTHER THROUGH THE “GREEN LENS”

- ☆ This person is a hero, whole and complete.
- ☆ They have goals, dreams, and a desire to make a difference.
- ☆ They have their own answers.
- ☆ They are contributing to me right now.
- ☆ They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- ☆ Disagreements can inspire discussion and learning.



REGULAR PRACTICES TO AVOID CONFLICT BEFORE IT STARTS:

- ★ At orientations we introduce our principles, communication systems, culture, and conflict resolution process.
- ★ Regular team process check-ins to reflect on our systems and raise any issues.
- ★ We continuously focus on smooth, effective, empathetic communication.
- ★ We create a culture of giving direct constructive feedback, listening to one another, and asking for help when needed.

If a disagreement is blocking progress, is hurtful, or is harmful, then a resolution needs to be found.

Anyone affected by a conflict can move an issue to the next resolution step if it is not being resolved at the current level of engagement.

Resolution means the parties involved feel heard, the agreed outcome or change is clear, and normal decision-making and activity within the collective is possible.

If a conflict continues to negatively impact an individual or the team, it is not resolved.

RESOLUTION STEPS

Generally, the process will start at step one and move from there as needed. However, someone could begin at a later step after seeking advice that it would be appropriate to the specific situation.

Ideally, the conflict resolution process is initiated with all conflict participants. But, if some parties are unwilling, the resolution process could be started with just one.

If you notice conflict between others that doesn't seem to be on the path to resolution, empower yourself to draw their attention to it. If necessary, you can suggest they engage the conflict resolution process.

Step 1 – Personal reflection & individual support –

Think through what happened. If you feel confused, overwhelmed, or are experiencing strong emotions, take time and space to process and clarify your thinking. Talk to a trusted friend, Vibe Guardian or cult member, to work through your own perspective and experience. Ask yourself what part you played in it, what you could have done differently, and what your needs are. If you feel you need to go beyond individual work to resolve the problem, move to the next step.

Step 2 – Direct communication –

As long as you feel safe, and the power balance and tone is conducive to constructive discussion, approach the person in question and talk it out. Be mindful of picking a good time and place (privacy, lack of time pressure, mutually agreed location, etc). If you don't feel like you can work it out one-on-one for any reason, move to the next step.

Step 3 – Supported communication

Bring in a mutually trusted third party to host a conversation with the people involved. If the third party feels insufficiently resourced (time, energy, or skill), or you've tried and it didn't resolve the conflict, move to the next step.

Step 4 – Vibe Guardian Team

If the previous steps have not resolved the conflict, reach out to the Vibe Guardian Team. They will try to find a mutually agreeable next step, such as hosting a mediation themselves, or inviting an external mediator or other expert in.

*** If the conflict is not suitable for Mediation / Conflict Resolution and needs to be raised and investigated we also have channels for both formal and anonymous complaint submission.*

CULTURE, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

RESPECTING YOUR BODY - We do not fall for grind or hustle culture and believe instead that through respecting our bodies we afford ourselves the health and energy to create. Furthermore, a rejection of overwork fosters accessibility.

INDIVIDUAL SOVEREIGNTY - We are the exclusive controllers of our body, energy, and life. We contribute our energy to the group on our own terms.

SUPPORTING YOUR FELLOW HUMANS - Filmmaking needs to be accessible to a wider section of society. We ought to support our fellow humans to enable them to create regardless of their capacity.

MUTUAL AID - We pool together the resources we can offer in order to build the groups capacity. Some may offer time, money or skills, some may give equipment or space and some may give a smile and words of encouragement.

DISTRIBUTED POWER - No one has more power than anyone else. We work together on equal footing.

DIRECT ACTION - We are creating change without relying on systemic or governmental intervention.

BUILD FOR THE LONG TERM – Projects we take on will lay the foundation for a stronger organisation and larger projects in the future, whether they are entirely successful or not.

LOVE-FOCUSED – We commit to a radical love and sympathy for our communities, our families, ourselves, and the earth.

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK IS

WELCOME - We're all learning and growing. We do this through consistent individual and group reflection, discussion, and feedback. We are open to both giving and receiving feedback.

COLLECTIVE DECISION MAKING -

We look for opportunities to include everyone's input to encourage broader investment in the process and group.

TEAMS - We appreciate opportunities to work in small groups because they provide accountability, excitement and a diversity of ideas.

VISIONARY - We believe a better world is possible, we will not let appeasements or concessions distract our focus from the larger vision of a fair world of film.

BIG PICTURE AWARENESS - We recognise our struggle is a symptom of larger systems and do not hide behind a 'non-political' stance.

AUTONOMY – Individual's ideas and energies are important and encouraged. We are structured to limit any coercion or control that could interfere with a person's rights of self direction and empowerment.

JOYOUS AND HUMOROUS – We don't take ourselves too seriously (although we are sincere) and take joy and humour into all we do.

TRAINING AND PERSONAL

GROWTH - We constantly seek opportunities to train and educate ourselves to improve our organising, our politics, and ourselves.

ASSUME BEST INTENTIONS - We are all working towards the same goals and as such we work to view the variety of individual expressions and actions through the lens of curiosity and comradery.

EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS – We give people the creative space to experience and experiment with their personal power, as well as their ability to impact their community.

COLLABORATION – As this issue is bigger than any singular organisation, we will work with other organisations and communities when we share a common cause to create social change. We collaborate while staying focused on our core values, methods, and mission.

INCLUSIVITY – We welcome anyone interested in the mission and principles of this group.

RESPONSIVE – We value input from the community and want to respond directly to the needs and concerns of those around us. We accept responsibility for our actions as individuals and as a group.

STRUCTURED FOR GROWTH - We use flexible structures that plan for growth and create space for new people to engage quickly and easily.

FIGHT ORGANISATIONAL INERTIA - Don't be afraid to try something new! Continue to analyse the organisation, its processes, these principles, and creatively work to improve the group to be what it can be.

LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Members Hub!:

<https://www.thefilmcult.com/#member>

Website:

<https://www.thefilmcult.com>

For logos, zine, meeting notes, consensus info, reports, handbook and role resources:

<https://www.thefilmcult.com/#resources>

Donate to the cult:

<https://www.thefilmcult.com/#funding>





MEMBERS HANDBOOK

1ST EDITION 2024