



ArtPlay SIGNAL Artist Learning Interview: Leah Jing McIntosh on the SIGNAL Young Creatives Lab

How and why did you first get involved at SIGNAL?

Honestly, I'd known about SIGNAL for a while, but I had been too shy to attend the workshops! I finally applied for the inaugural Young Creatives Lab in 2017, applying to run a poetry and performance night for my then-fledgling publication [Liminal](#)¹. I didn't expect to get the grant/EOI and I was absolutely thrilled!

How would you describe your experience at SIGNAL?

It was wonderful, and the mentors, SIGNAL team and the other participants in the lab were so welcoming. I loved meeting the other participants in the three-day intensive, and forming our projects in tandem. It was a deep learning curve, making it important to experience it together.

In the Lab, you spend a lot of time together in quite a vulnerable state because you discuss what you want to create, have the opportunity to both give and receive feedback, and importantly, have the chance to learn together. That kind of relationship building feels invaluable. We're still in touch in various ways (as collaborators and supportive colleagues) and I find that really special.

How has working with SIGNAL helped you achieve your creative goals?

I have a soft spot for the Young Creatives Lab as it allowed me to step into a programming role for the first time. We were given such strong support for the event we held. In terms of the actual event, we had such positive feedback for the performances, and even reached capacity on a 37 degree day! It was a dream.

We have produced subsequent events inspired by this initial event. Being accepted as part of the YCL also gave me the confidence I needed to apply for future grants — *Liminal* has since received funding from Creative Victoria, Multicultural Arts Victoria and the Australia Council of the Arts, and I am grateful for SIGNAL for supporting the LIMINAL project in our very first stages.

What did you learn?

In the Lab, we learnt the logistics behind being an art practitioner or programmer: what a run sheet or risk assessment looks like, what is needed in terms of preparation, what it means to be an arts practitioner in Melbourne and how to budget.

Apart from these quantifiable experiences, acceptance to the Lab also just recognised the value of the LIMINAL project, which, looking back, was really important for the longevity of the project. I'd started *Liminal* alone without institutional validation or funding so to have SIGNAL support us was really important in that nascent stage.

What's next in your artistic journey?

¹ www.liminalmag.com

This year, we launched our first book, are about to launch another. We're also just about to announce the winners of the inaugural LIMINAL Fiction Prize for Writers of Colour, the first prize of its kind. I'm very excited for the second half of 2019!

What would you say to other young people thinking about getting involved with SIGNAL programs?

Go for it! It'll change your life.

Leah Jing McIntosh is a writer and photographer. She edits LIMINAL magazine, a space for the exploration of the Asian-Australian experience. She participated in the inaugural Young Creatives Lab program in 2017 and has since been a grant assessor and mentor at SIGNAL.