

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY (APRIL 2019)

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CONTEMPORARY ART NETWORK (SCAN)

SCAN is a membership body. We have over 130 named members working in publicly funded and commercial art galleries, artist-led organisations, production facilities, local authority museums and higher education institutions as well as those working independently as artists, educators and curators.

Our [Visual Arts Manifesto](#), created in 2017 in partnership with Scottish Artists Union and Engage Scotland, states our aim to address the significant challenges that exist within the visual arts in Scotland.

Q1 What would a sustainable model of funding look like?

In February 2018 we submitted evidence to the Culture Committee on the widespread concern among our members about the funding infrastructure, in response to the decisions taken regarding RFO funding from Creative Scotland. We said: *'It is clear there is an almost unanimous agreement from artists, organisations and Creative Scotland itself that the current funding models urgently need overhauled. SCAN, through its members, has been raising these issues for several years.'*

The contemporary visual art sector in Scotland is high-achieving, highly-regarded and seen by many outside the country as containing models of good practice, creativity and collaboration that are to be celebrated and followed. Eight Turner prize winners and a further 16 nominees in 35 years have been Scottish, Scotland-based or educated in Scotland; its creative communities from Glasgow to the Northern Isles are vibrant and inspiring, producing work that not only challenges the viewer but that in many cases has a real and lasting impact on community wellbeing. As the Scottish Government itself has stated: *'Scotland has an enduring world-wide reputation as a centre for ideas, learning, education, creativity and innovation.'* (A Culture Strategy for Scotland, gov.scot)

The strength of the sector's achievement and ambition, however, is not matched by the support provided it. We're talking about a crisis.

There are several key points to make about the status quo, which in turn inform our submission on how a sustainable funding model could look:

Response 1: Strategic thinking to avert crisis

Many visual arts organisations were awarded standstill funding deals in the most recent round of regular funding (RFO funding) from Creative Scotland. By the end of this period (2021) that means a real term drop in funding of around 15% since 2014. If this trend continues with the next round of RFO funding, there is real concern among our members that they will reach breaking point. Standstill will become collapse.

Organisations have worked hard to mitigate these real term reductions by doing more with less, however we are frustrated by the lack of a more strategic approach by government and funders to maximise the potential for cultural investment and explore art form strategies with the sector directly.

Running concurrent to this, recent cuts to local authority budgets have placed arts provision across Scotland under serious threat; in some areas facing decimation. For example, in Aberdeen, grassroots arts groups including the much-loved Peacock Visual Arts faced a 50-100% reduction in funding. Negotiations continue but the situation is representative of how the cultural lifeblood of a place can be put at immediate risk when budgets are tight.

Local authorities must be supported to implement long term and strategic thinking about their cultural offer across departmental priorities. This includes recognising the place-making value and accessibility offer that free arts provision provides to a neighbourhood ecology. For example, in cities like Edinburgh where commercial pressures on the city centre mean that in its role as landlord the local authority is suggesting tripling the rent for the arts organisation and production facility Stills. This would make its continued presence in the city centre untenable, and would compromise free access to all. The importance of cultural provision to city centre economies, footfall and wider wellbeing was amply demonstrated in Glasgow with the temporary closure of the CCA after the Glasgow School of Art fire.

We call for a funding model that will put the sector back on a stable footing and will work strategically with the sector to ensure that available funding is put to best use.

Response 2: Understand and commit to the value of art at the highest level

A firm commitment is needed at government level to put the value and support of the arts at the heart of policy and decision making. Societal links between cultural activity and wider wellbeing should be more clearly understood and set within the government's strategic direction.

It's crucial to recognise that contemporary visual art, in the vast majority of cases, is freely accessible to anyone in Scotland. Going to a gallery to see a world-famous artwork, taking part in a city-wide art festival or exploring public sculpture doesn't cost the visitor a penny. This access does not come for nothing, however, and it is important that its cost is fully appreciated by at national and local level. A thriving visual art scene requires investment.

The implementation of a Culture Strategy by the Scottish Government would, we hope, go some way to embedding the value of art within decision making across policy areas – however, this strategy must be robust. [Our response to the draft strategy](#) (September 2018) stated that: *'The wide definition of culture may be welcome in the opportunities it provides for placing engagement, participation and inclusion at the heart of cultural policy, but the strategy appears to favour engagement with academia and organisations over artists when it comes to engaging with sectoral expertise, and rarely acknowledges the skills and experience of artists and the cultural workforce more generally.'*

Response 3: Make art part of our infrastructure

Initiatives that put visual art and artists at the centre of local and national infrastructure are to be welcomed. An oft-cited example is Ireland's [Per Cent for Art scheme](#) where 1% of the

cost of any publicly funded capital, infrastructural and building development can be allocated to the commissioning of a work of art. Similar schemes are also active in Scotland, for example Aberdeenshire Council.

However, we would advocate going further. Is there an opportunity to embed high-quality artistic commissioning not just within capital infrastructure but in procurement more widely; thus cementing the ambition of the Culture Strategy.

While a wide range of international examples of supporting the arts exists (we would refer the Committee to our 2018 report, supported by the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities, on [International Best Practice in the Visual Arts](#)) we feel the best route to a sustainable funding model that works for Scotland is through close strategic working with the sector itself to explore ways that Scotland can lead in placing art and culture at its heart.

Response 4: Maintain our global reputation by supporting cultural mobility

In a post-Brexit society, appropriate mechanisms should be made available to ensure our visual artists and arts organisations are able to maintain and build links between Scotland and the rest of the world. Lack of a dedicated visual arts lead at British Council Scotland is a concern in this regard. A sustainable funding model would put cultural mobility at its heart.

Response 5: Create conditions for a fairer income for artists

We want artists' careers to be more sustainable in the longer-term. The survey that SCAN undertook on behalf of Creative Scotland for the Visual Arts Review (2016) revealed that the average total income of all respondents was £17,526. This drops to £14,933 for those who are self-employed, the majority of whom are artists. These figures are far below the median wage for Scotland.

Guidance and support around payment of artists when working with or exhibiting in funded galleries should exist. Work being led by the Scottish Artists Union, for example, on fair contracts for artists should be explored and recognition of fair income guidelines at the level of the funding body should be built into decision making.

International examples exist of conditions that make for a fairer, more sustainable artists' income. The report cited above ([Cultural Policy: International Best Practice in the Visual Arts](#)) states that: *'In Canada a number of tax deductions are available for self-employed artists, such as travel and work space expenses, professional membership fees and promotional costs. In Belgium a 'small fees scheme' ensures that small payments received by artists are tax exempt.'*

Q2 How should that funding be made available to artists?

Response 1: Ensure funding is administered through an arms-length body

While we have clearly stated the need for local and national government to place art and its impact at the heart of policy, the distribution of public funding is best-placed within a politically-neutral arms-length body, which is not steered by the prevailing political wind.

Response 2: Create funding cycles that allow for development

The three-year funding cycle for regularly-funded organisations and the annual open project funding scheme (both Creative Scotland) have been acknowledged as restrictive and difficult to administer for organisations and individuals in the sector. In layman's terms, complex application and reporting processes demand significant amounts of time, from small, often part-time teams of staff and/or volunteers.

A return to the five-year cycle of Foundation Funding, for example, would be one way to ease this burden. Rolling funding agreements, with accountability built in through regular contact with funding body representatives, may also be a way forward, allowing for greater security of those who are employed in the sector, and who depend on the contemporary visual art ecology; freelance artists; curators; gallery staff; technicians; educators... the list goes on. They have children to feed, rents to pay and ambitions for a sustainable future just like the rest of Scotland.

Response 3: Create separate funding streams for artists and for those who support them

It is crucial that the committee understands the wider ecology of visual art. Freelance artists need organisations; places to create and show work, curators to support and develop work and spaces to learn, share and evolve. However, the competitive atmosphere that has arisen in recent years as a result of a contracting funding pot has pitted individual practitioners against organisations and sector development bodies. This should be picked apart in any new funding model so that the various strands of the sector are clearly delineated and their respective value understood.

Response 4: Implement peer-reviewed decision making

A fairer approach to decision making consistently raised by our members is peer review, a decision-making process by which funding is allocated following discussion and review by those who have a working knowledge of the sector. An example is Frame, the arms-length funding body for contemporary art in Finland. Frame operates a peer-reviewed decision-making process and board members sit for no more than two years. [Reference]

Response 5: Continue to foster open dialogue

Contemporary visual art is exciting, refreshing, surprising. Scotland's strong artistic DNA is built upon new ideas, and some of those come from artist-run initiatives, such as Transmission (Glasgow), Rhubaba (Edinburgh) and Generator (Dundee) – all currently run by voluntary committees, and all of which present new, diverse work. A sustainable funding model should be intelligent enough to allow for fluid means of creating and sustaining emerging art. This is achieved through dialogue and understanding of the sector.

Response 6: Establish clearer routes to funding and support

Further development and innovation in schemes that link the sector to business, education and philanthropic support would be welcome. However, it is important to note that by its innovative and democratic nature contemporary visual art will not always fit within the tighter confines of corporate sponsorship or patronage. Public investment in the sector is necessary to allow Scotland to maintain its place as a hotbed of creativity and ideas. Clear mapping of access to various sources of income, whether public or private, should be provided so that artists and arts organisations at all stages of their development are better informed and guided to create their best work.