

## CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

#### SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH ARTISTS UNION

The **Scottish Artists Union** is the representative voice of visual artists, applied artists and makers living and working in Scotland. We campaign on behalf of our members for better pay, terms and conditions for artists and with **SCAN & Engage Scotland** established the **Visual Arts Manifesto** to ensure that the sector in Scotland is sustainable and based on equality, fairness and diversity.

We have surveyed our members each year since 2012 on their views on the visual arts sector, the latest survey results form part of this submission and are referenced in the text below.

#### **Funding**

The number of artists receiving any public or private funding is still low. Our 2018 members' survey reported;

- Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents' work was externally funded (i.e. not from personal income/sales).
- Only 29% of members have applied for public funding in the past five years.
- A quarter (25%) of members reported that they had received public funding from Creative Scotland, Glasgow Life or other local authority grants in the past five years.
- A quarter (25%) stated that they had applied for and received a private funding award (e.g. trust, foundation or sponsorship) in the past five years.
- The members were also asked to reflect on Creative Scotland's funding structures, specifically on how far they believe the structures understand and address the needs of visual and applied artists. Seventy-four members answered this question; only one in every six (16%) answered that they believe Creative Scotland understands and addresses the needs of artists.
- When asked to provide more context to their response members gave a range of reasons and highlighted their perceptions of Creative Scotland as an organisation. They mentioned the challenges around the application process, perceptions of organisational bias and a sense of disconnect with the sector. The most common response however was around the challenges of applying for Creative Scotland funding. A few mentioned unsuccessful attempts at getting funding, describing the process as unrealistic, especially for artists who are often self-employed and work alone. Several suggested these poor experiences were compounded by the lack of support and feedback offered by Creative Scotland on an unsuccessful application.

## **Making a living**

- Four out of every five members are self-employed
- The majority of members still make a very modest income with many still having to supplement their earning with alternative income sources. Only 9% had £14,000 or above of taxable earnings from their practice in the 2017/18 financial year. 64% had less than £5,000.
- Three out of four members consistently fail to be paid rates equivalent to the union's published rates. At 76%, this is the highest figure in recent years.
- The lack of payment of exhibition fees remains high; only one in four (24%) members received an exhibition fee when exhibiting their work in publicly funded galleries.
- Only 16% of survey respondents always receive contracts for paid work

**The Scottish Artists Union calls for all public and publicly funded organisations:**

- **to issue contracts to artists**
- **pay rates based on the Scottish Artists Union published rates**
- **pay artists an exhibition fee for all publicly accessible exhibitions and events**

**We call on the Scottish Government to implement a Universal Basic Income for all citizens, which we see as vital for the long-term sustainability of artists living and working in Scotland.**

**The Scottish Artists Union calls on all government agencies and departments to recognise artists, their practice and work within the welfare and tax systems; ensuring no benefits or tax regimes unfairly discriminate against an individual, self-employed, precarious worker.**

## **The state of the sector**

- Most members had the opportunity to showcase their work this year and feel the amount of opportunities to showcase their work remains steady compared to previous years. Only a small proportion of members believe the amount of opportunities is decreasing.
- Perceptions of inequalities within the sector endure, particularly in relation to gender and class.
- The most popular priority for members continues to be fair pay and conditions, closely followed by more access to funding opportunities.

**The Scottish Artists Union calls for greater support of artist-run organisations within the visual arts sector and that all organisations funding the visual arts have the resources to pay artists fairly.**

**Individual artists are the main creative force in the visual arts in Scotland and they should be recognised and celebrated accordingly. Artists should be consulted first, employed first and paid first on every project.**

**External factors impacting the sector**

- While many artists are yet to notice any impact from Brexit, there are still quite a few who have concerns about its potential impact – many stating the uncertainty surrounding what is happening in relation to Brexit as a key part of the problem.

**The Scottish Government must do everything it can to stop the negative impact Brexit will have on the visual arts in Scotland, supporting the continuing right for art and artists to cross borders, collaborate and learn from each other without restriction.**