

**SCOTTISH ARTIST UNION
WRITTEN RESPONSE TO CREATIVE SCOTLAND BILL
APRIL 2008**

The Scottish Artists Union is the leading representative organisation for visual and applied artists in Scotland. A registered trade union, our membership exceeds five hundred artists working in the country, and includes a varied cross-section of professional experience and modes of practice.

We welcome the introduction of the Creative Scotland Bill, the first step towards making the nation's new cultural development agency a reality. We have waited for a considerable length of time for a definitive statement about Creative Scotland and it is disappointing to see how little of the organisation's ultimate form and function is delineated in the Bill. This is perhaps indicative of an adoption of the "arms length principle" for which we and many other organisations lobbied so hard after the publication of the last administration's Culture Bill. That being the case, we cannot complain that the new Bill lacks fulsome instructions to the new agency's board. Indeed the Bill merely sketches, in the briefest terms, their remit; and a very broad remit it is.

Firstly, the wide variety of "creative industries" (a term we dislike) with which the new agency will be concerning itself suggests that more than 50% of Creative Scotland's resources will be dedicated to the support of largely or wholly commercial enterprise and mercantile practice.

Explanatory Notes page 3 p.12- "advertising; architecture; crafts; design; designer fashion; film; interactive leisure software; music; performing arts; publishing; TV and radio; and visual arts"

While it has always been maintained that Creative Scotland will be more than merely "Scottish Arts Council plus Scottish Screen", a new agency with a new mission, we are surprised that so much of it appears to fall within that of Scottish Enterprise. Will a new government-funded "non-creative" enterprise agency be established as a sister to Creative Scotland? Will all the money currently spent by Scottish Enterprise on "creative industries" be given to Creative Scotland?

Certainly the Bill's addenda suggest that Creative Scotland's inaugural board can expect to be funded to a *lesser* extent than the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen combined, while being tasked with considerably *more*:

Explanatory Notes page 9 p.65- "Costs associated with amalgamating the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen and the development of new ways of working relevant to Creative Scotland... will be met from savings from the two organisations' grant in aid which is required by the Scottish Government."

The Scottish Artists Union understands these required savings to be equivalent to 2% per organisation per year. Such required cuts have, in the last session, resulted in the Scottish Arts Council making a below the rate of inflation increase on their foundation level funding and freezing their partial funding of arts organisations. What further reductions may Scotland's artists expect next year as the pot steadily shrinks and the number of organisations and projects eligible for grants grows exponentially?

Secondly, the authors of the Bill have argued that they are attempting to be as positive and non-prescriptive in their language as possible. In that spirit, they have excluded a definition of Culture and expunged the word Artist from the Bill.

Policy Memorandum page 5 p.22- "It would also seem inappropriate to refer to 'artists' in the Bill, because Creative Scotland will have priorities and interests in a wide range of cultural forms, some of whose practitioners might well not refer to themselves as 'artists.'" Page 6 p.23- "Any such definition [of Culture] might end up unnecessarily constraining or confusing the actions of Creative Scotland and possibly other public bodies."

The former point is of especial concern to us. It strikes us that any artist, of any description, working with any medium and in any art form (visual and applied arts, digital media, performance, music, film, the written and spoken word etc.) will not find the label of "artist" troublesome. It appears to us that the decision to remove it from the Creative Scotland Bill's lexicon is not to better accommodate the semantics of creative practice, but to ease the introduction of wholly non-artistic, commercially driven endeavours into Creative Scotland's brief.

Combined with the reasons given for not requiring Creative Scotland's board to include representatives from each sector or industry, the net result of the Bill is a virtual guarantee- even before the Transition Team concludes its work- that visual art will be a minority within a minority voice at the "big table" of Creative Scotland, to wit:

Policy Memorandum page 4 p.18- "Ministers consider that the best way to achieve this balance among the members [of the board] is to give them discretion in the selection of members, rather than reserving places for the many important sectors and sections of the community."

The Bill's authors appear to be wary of creating an agency headed by a board divided. Instead, they invite a war at Creative Scotland's doorstep as any and all practitioners from every imaginable "creative industry" vie for their attention. Who will prove the best equipped to play this game? Career artists or career entrepreneurs? Worse still, the lack of definition at this early stage could result in such elasticity in the interpretation of Creative Scotland's remit as to allow its transformation into a "none of the above" funding body, obliged to entertain petitions from any sector that can be couched in the same woolly cultural-industrial jargon enshrined in the Bill.

- i. We believe that any broadening of Creative Scotland's remit to encompass activities not currently supported by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen must be accompanied by a concordant increase in the new agency's budget.
- ii. We believe that, unless Scottish Enterprise is to be restructured or scrapped, the new agency's first duty of care is to the art forms that are the current charges of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen.
- iii. We fail to see how those working in these art forms will be better served by a development agency that does not feature discrete departments, officers, board representatives and- crucially- budgets dedicated to each.

We therefore urge the Committee for Education, Lifelong Learning & Culture to closely examine the language of the Bill, members of parliament to consider tabling amendments that will address its deficits and the Transition Team responsible for Creative Scotland's advent to repudiate the Bill's lack of conviction on what does and does not constitute cultural contribution.

Terry Anderson
President