

Scottish Artists Union Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 25 September 2007, 7pm

Street Level Gallery, 2nd Floor, 48 King Street, Glasgow G1

Agenda

1. The President's Opening Remarks
2. Minutes of 2006 AGM
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Motion – Constitutional Amendment
5. Members' Motions & Proposals
6. Election of New Executive Committee
7. Member's Report – Su Grierson and Lorraine Robson:
Prejudice in Art Project Selection Criteria
8. Member's Report – Linda Mallett
Issues Facing the Rural Artist
9. Guest Speaker – Liz Gardiner, Fablevision
Cultural Planning in the New Scotland
10. President's Closing Remarks

Attending: Terry Anderson, Chris Biddlecombe, Su Grierson, Rob Hain, Laura Hunter, Chris Kelly, Linda Mallett, June McEwan, Ken Palmer, Fiona Pilgrim (Associate), Lorraine Robson, Penny Sharp, Stephanie Spindler, Jayne Taylor.

Apologies: Victoria Bernie, David Cook, Beth Forde, Rose Frain, Chris Fremantle (Associate), Ed Hunter, Anna King, Joy Kinniston, Joyce MacFarlane, Guyan Porter, Jane Woodford

Guests: Liz Gardiner

1. The President's Opening Remarks: Terry Anderson

Terry welcomed everyone for coming along and explained that we had not got enough people attending to make a quorum. This means that the Financial Report will be subject to a postal ballot for approval.

2. Minutes of 2006 AGM

Proposed by Laura Hunter and seconded by Fiona Pilgrim.

3. Treasurer's Report: Chris Kelly

A copy of the audited annual account for 2006-07 was circulated, the audit was carried out by Danzig and Co. in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Practice and with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Chris thanked Danzig for their work and support in producing the accounts and he went on to thank Fiona Danskin, for her invaluable work as our administrative assistant.

Chris explained that this has been a very good year, with a steadily growing membership taking our income from subscriptions from £5,996 (05-06) to £8,454 (06-07). We have spent more than previous years, investing £3,193 in our marketing through the production of new leaflets, membership cards, poster and display materials. We have also had to increase our expenditure in maintaining the membership administration. Therefore our total expenditure for the year has doubled to £10,180 over the previous years £5,046. This however has been well planned plan for and is well within the affordability of the union, with our total assets currently standing at £9,243.

Chris pointed out that the executive committee itself only cost the Union £308 (in travelling expenses), which he felt shows excellent value for money. Over all the Union is in a healthy financial position.

4. Motion – Constitutional Amendment:

Terry introduced the proposed amendment and he explained that we are recommending that members vote to support the proposal as this will give us greater ability to maintain continuity on the executive. Jayne Taylor then read the proposal –

We the Executive Committee of the Scottish Artists' Union propose that the following change to the constitution of the union be made. Where at item

5. Terms of Office

b) Office-bearers may serve only three consecutive terms in any one or combination of posts.

That this shall be changed to

5. Terms of Office

b) 'In the interests of both continuity and renewal of the Union's Executive, Officer-bearers may serve up to (but not more than) three consecutive terms in any one, or five consecutive terms in any combination, of the four posts.'

Jayne Taylor then proposed the amendment which was seconded by Penny Sharp.

Ken Palmer suggested that the wording of the new clause was still too restrictive, and wondered if Executive Members shouldn't be permitted five year terms regardless of the role or roles in which they serve. Terry Anderson, Chris Kelly and Fiona Pilgrim explained that the sitting Executive Committee's concern is for both the continuity of the SAU and ensuring that new blood is always brought in. Therefore the clause is constructed to ensure that, for example, an SAU Presidential candidate could be drawn from a group of experienced Office Bearers, but prevents those same Office Bearers from simply swapping roles and keeping the organisation in the same hands for years on end.

The committee received 22 votes in absentia and 8 votes from the floor, the motion was passed with a total of 30 votes. There were no votes against and no abstentions.

5. Members' Motions & Proposals

There were none tabled.

6. Election of New Executive Committee

Those standing for election to the executive were: Terry Anderson, Chris Biddlecombe, Chris Fremantle, Chris Kelly, Su Grierson, Laura Hunter, Penny Sharp, Jayne Taylor, and Rob Hain.

As there is no quorum we will send out a ballot to approve the new committee along with the Minutes of the AGM.

7. Member's Report by Su Grierson and Lorraine Robson: Prejudice in Art Project Selection Criteria

Su began the presentation by explaining that a major factor affecting artists revolves around the terms and conditions that apply to their daily exhibiting and contractual lives. Sometimes there are restrictions based on age or location that seem arbitrary, irrelevant and unreasonable. Although it is now against the law to apply ageism, it does still occur and we must be vigilant to protest when examples are found. The Union has recently done just that. In one case cited by Su the explanation given for the upper age limit of 40, was that the organisers wanted to limit the number of applicants for administrative ease.

There are many instances where artists are simply overlooked, for example exhibition invites that forgot to name the artists taking part. As artists don't want to appear 'demanding' they put up with this behaviour, but a letter from the Union can make a difference to how artists might be treated in the future. Another issue that Su feels we should persevere with is standardised Rates of Pay, which we have been told we cannot promote as this is now illegal. We should look for other ways to help our members to get the information that will enable them to be fairly paid.

Lorraine is a new member who joined recently; she told us how she applied for a workshop project in a neighbouring area to where she lives. On the reply date she was informed that due to the unexpected response to the job advert, that only applicants from the home county would be eligible. She lives 10 minutes from the workshop location but was over the border so was discounted.

As applications and proposals can be complex and time consuming to put together Lorraine felt that if she had realised that she wouldn't have been considered due to her address, that she would not have wasted the time applying.

Clearly candidates were not being selected on ability but by locality and this should have been made clear from the outset. The Union wrote a letter to the offending organisation on Lorraine's behalf and since then she went on to the Axis web site forum to ask if other artists had had similar treatment and received several responses. Changing the goal posts after applications have been lodged is a totally unacceptable practice. Often there are participation fees for competitions, which are levied whether you are selected or not. All of this is demoralising and draining on precious resources. Su & Lorraine will continue to pursue this idea of fair treatment for artists within the application procedure.

8. Member's Report by Linda Mallett: Issues Facing the Rural Artist

Linda recently attended a conference on Rural Networking – Artists Aspirations, Concerns and Approaches, held at the Dovecot Gallery, Dumfries on the 12th September which 40 people attended. Dumfries and Galloway has benefited from European funding over the last 20 years, which has brought many artists into the area, which is generally very rural with artists spread far and wide. The event was aimed at strengthening the existing network and getting artists together to share ideas. They held discussions around the themes and produced three lists of priorities as follows:

Aspirations

Meeting other Artists (Centres like Dovecot are important)
Stimulation
Risk Taking (Artist Led, a big arts infrastructure suppresses risk)
Raising Awareness – creating audiences, a broader scope.
Show and tell – criticism and feed back on work.
More informed meetings.

Concerns

Lack of self confidence – isolation (although ironically people are drawn to the area because of the isolation).
Maintaining momentum.
Time/Funding/Travel (decentralised large area)
Burn out – setting up, maintaining and sustaining issues.
Individualities – tendency to polarise/specialise (Voluntary Sector/Professional)

Approaches

Networking
Giving and taking
Do it
Being Direct
Artist Led (more of)
Different ways to network (Internet, socials, informal gatherings)
New ways to work together.

Priorities

People drawn to the area by the isolation.
Space
Strong on informal support network

Terry thanked Linda for her report and pointed out that we have had many new members joining from rural areas and Dumfries and Galloway particularly. The union hopes to be able to identify members from across Scotland who would be willing to represent SAU within their region.

Terry then introduces our Guest speaker, Liz Gardiner from Fablevision and the National Cultural Planning and Strategy Forum.

9. Guest Speaker – Liz Gardiner, Fablevision: Cultural Planning in the New Scotland

What is cultural planning? It is a cultural approach to planning and policy, which puts artists at the heart of the planning process. It aims to be holistic and inclusive, mapping resources and partnerships that are positive. It is a 'from the bottom up' process as opposed to 'from the top down' and is never intended to be instrumental. The artist's role is that of facilitator and teacher, where they are put at the core of policy and planning from regeneration to education. The aim is not to compromise an artists work but to find ways for their work to be relevant and powerful so that their work is 'socially engaged' and relevant.

The process of Cultural Planning begins with mapping cultural resources in an area (sometimes resources are disguised or not immediately obvious). Liz gave some examples of projects that used this approach.

Birds of Paradise are now a leading arts company using dance and drama with disabled performers, this project started as a social inclusion project that wanted to challenge how people saw disability.

A project about making the community safer, involved young people using cameras to interview local people of all ages about their concerns. This started a dialogue which led to a neglected piece of wasteland being transformed into a children's play area and the resultant film being premiered at an outside location where local teens 'hung out'.

The Linthouse Urban Village project began with local people thinking about the sorts of shops they would like to see replace the row of empty units blighting their neighbourhood. This led to a cosmetic makeover for the empty units, a festival event, community café and separate art gallery and project space.

The Royston Road Regeneration project, created a public space and project around an old church spire in Townhead, the project went on to support training and employment initiatives, leading to the setting up of a local radio station, Bolt FM.

Copperworks Housing Association went on a leadership training weekend in Aviemore to look at ways to transform a piece of local waste ground; this resulted in a new children's play area and a local festival. All these examples demonstrate the building of 'social capital' and many have led to the establishment of new 'social enterprises' and community initiatives.

The National Cultural Planning and Strategy Forum (NCPSF) was established before the Cultural Commission consultation towards the creation of a Culture Bill Scotland (draft), with the aim of lobbying for the inclusion of Cultural Planning in the bill. The resulting first draft has taken some of the ideas of cultural planning onboard and information on the recommendations and resultant response to the proposed bill can be found at www.ncpsg.org

The forum has criticised the draft bill for having no clear definition of culture and failing to address training and capacity building issues. They offer a course on Cultural Planning which is in partnership with the University of Strathclyde, De Montford University and the City of London University. Those participating on this course are encouraged to bring the cultural planning approach to the projects they are involved with. There are currently 13 pilot Cultural 'Pathfinder' Programmes being run with local authorities across Scotland and the NCPSF and Fablevision is involved with 5 of these. So far initial findings from the South Ayrshire project suggest that there are two main strands emerging. There is a tendency to see creative arts education as separate from the main curriculum and also to see the scope of creative arts intervention within a very narrow frame.

The Pathfinder projects are still developing, so there will be a chance to look more carefully at how these projects develop in the near future.

Terry thanked Liz for her presentation and he invited questions and comments from the floor.

The discussion that ensued highlighted the problem with using terms like 'community artist' which is a term that Liz feels is misrepresentative of the type of work that artists engage in. For others, this is a term that people have just begun to understand. Regeneration and Cultural Planning agendas are possible new ways of directed resources, but would that necessarily mean more resources? Would artists really be listened to and included, or just expected to 'deliver' a new set of agendas? Everyone hoped that cultural planning would be an opportunity to support quality and not quantity 'sticking plaster' arts. Other countries seem to have more respect for their artists, with bigger audiences for their work. There should be artists working in schools so that children can learn about what we do as a job of work. There are real issues with how art is taught (or not) from primary school upward, what can we do to widen access to art education. A cultural planning policy may redirect money for art into education, which may mean less available for working in communities.

Terry thanked everyone for their comments.

10. President's Closing Remarks

Terry's involvement in the SAU predates its formal inauguration in 2001 and joined the executive to represent professional cartoonists (an art form often overlooked). Since

becoming President Terry has been to the Scottish Parliamentary debates- specifically over the Culture Bill- to speak on our behalf and found that ours was the only visual artists' organisation invited. The fact that we are a completely independent organisation is a strength and it looks as if there will be plenty to do in the next 12 months, as the new Scottish Government settles in and the future of the Culture Bill is settled. Members of the Creative Scotland board were invited to speak at our AGM, but no-one was prepared to come along, sighting that they too know very little about their future role at this point in time.

Terry drew attention to our new web site (launched in April) and urged all attending to visit and to make comments and suggestions to help us keep it up to date and relevant. To close the proceedings, Terry thanked Linda, Lorraine, Su and Liz for their presentations and in particular thanked Chris Kelly, who will be stepping down from his role as Treasurer and Fiona Pilgrim, who is leaving the Executive Committee, for all her hard work as the Union's Secretary. He went on to thank everyone for attending the meeting and expressed the hope that we would all attend again next year.