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From: Mary Bourne [clunymore@yahoo.co.uk]
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Education:

SCHOOLS

The arts are a means of expression and understanding: they should be integrated into every part of the school curriculum with far greater co-operation /coordination between the various departments in schools. Thus understanding of the moral implications of discoveries in say the realms of physics or biology could be developed through the media of poetry or visual art etc. The arts are about every part of life and are not a discreet discipline.

It would also be beneficial for children to have far more contact with "real artists" (that is to say people who practice their art full time) in addition to their art teachers whose experience is almost inevitably going to be different that of the full time artist. To talk to say a composer who can explain how their life experience has given rise to a particular piece of music can bring that music alive in a way no other means can.

ART SCHOOL

My experience of visual art training in the 80s was that it missed out huge areas involved in actually practicing as an artist. Art School training needs to become more connected with artists outwith academic institutions to ensure artists gain the full range of skills needed to operate successfully at a professional level (this has begun to happen but needs to go further)

Institutional Infrastructure

Much much more could be done by local authorities both to support artists in their area and to house the arts. Provision is very uneven and greater clarity about L.A. responsibilities in this area would force those which do not perform well to get their acts together. Funding at a suitable level must be available for L.A.s to fulfill their obligations: there is no substitute for staff to initiate projects and buildings to house them. Some sort of comparative audit of facilities and events available in the various areas of Scotland would enable gaps to be addressed.

Currently independent arts organisations exist in a constant state of uncertainty and staff spend ridiculous amounts of time fire-fighting and fundraising in a piecemeal fashion. A much greater level of security through higher levels of funding would enable these very professional, interesting and vibrant organisations to get on with delivering arts programmes instead of inefficiently wasting time chasing funds.

Whilst the National Companies do a good job touring I feel it is very important for the various regions of Scotland to have some arts organisations of their own. For those of us who live a long way from the centre a sense of an artistic "family" being there to support us is very important. We need the facilities and social structure accessible to us to enable us to "fulfil our creative potential". We also need opportunities to work and earn our livings at a professional level.

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"Critical mass" is a big issue for artists living in rural areas: there needs to be a big enough number of us living in an area for anything to happen, but until things start happening in our area no more artists will feel they can make a viable living there. This is also an issue for audiences who miss out on art springing from their own place. Better support from L.A.s and more rurally based organisations would help to overcome this catch 22 situation.

Scotland-wide agencies can be useful, but will often simply miss a lot of the unique richness in the local culture in areas they do not know well.

Delivery of services and access to them.

See above - better funding levels with more staff on the ground to initiate and deliver projects both through L.A.s and independent arts organisations. Where there are staff in place there is a great diversity of interesting and effective projects. There simply are not enough people to co-ordinate enough projects across the country.

Marketing and promotion

Obviously arts staff need to be suitably trained in marketing and audience development skills.

However it is my experience that if the events/projects are available there is no problem getting people to come along to them. It is a lack of opportunity rather than apathy that is the problem.

Creative potential

Ensure the people of Scotland have the opportunity to participate in the arts from an early age and then leave it up to them to take it where they will.

Cultural Rights

For me there are two key issues:

1. accessibility of opportunities to participate in the arts: unless you have tried it how do you know what it can mean?
2. A vibrant Scottish culture. This requires support for Scottish artists to take their creativity in its own direction, not some preconceived notion of what the arts should be.

Key issues for Organisation

For the Organisation which I am involved with (Scottish Sculpture Workshop in rural Aberdeenshire) the key issue is freeing staff time from perpetual fundraising and firefighting so that these highly qualified, creative people can do what they were employed to do: deliver art projects.

Mary Bourne
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