

1 Arts.



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27 SEP 2004

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23<sup>rd</sup> September 2004

James Boyle  
Cultural Commission  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
Edinburgh EH4 1EG

Dear Mr Boyle ,

I have pleasure in enclosing the Scottish Artists Union's report to the Cultural Commission. I also enclose a CD with the document in PDF format.

The Union will be happy to engage in further discussions regarding the role of Visual Artists in the Culture of Scotland.

I am happy to be contacted personally by e-mail although I am exhibiting in Japan during October. : sugrierson@aol.com

Please note SAU's new mobile phone number : 07849 637 546

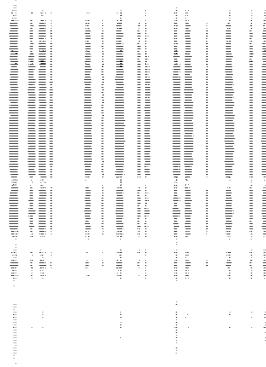
Yours sincerely

Su Grierson : President : Scottish Artists Union



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**Report to the Cultural Commission**  
September 2004

## **SCOTTISH ARTISTS UNION**

The Scottish Artists Union lobbies on behalf of visual artists, including applied artists, and protects and extends artists' rights. It is the only representative voice for Visual artists in Scotland

SAU is open to professional visual artists of all disciplines as full members, and arts workers who can become associate members.

SAU is registered as an official Trades Union and is currently researching the possibility for affiliation with a larger Union.

SAU is the only new Trades Union of the 21st century.

The Union is supported entirely by membership subscriptions, and is run by a voluntary executive committee.

## **PART 1.**

In order to focus on the position of visual artists within the cultural sector, it is necessary to address some wider questions about culture itself in order to give context to our position; we ask 4 questions:

### **1. What is culture?**

Culture is a mirror that society holds up in order to see itself reflected back from new angles so that it might know itself better. This includes a wide spectrum of views from the flattering, comforting, re-assuring view which might be quite popular, to more challenging perspectives that might pose difficult questions we sometimes prefer not to hear.

WE argue that the full range of this cultural activity is necessary, and is indeed intrinsic to society, and that the outer limits are important in defining what culture is, as distinct from entertainment and recreation.

We do not believe that any government should choose to support only those sections of culture with an apparent 'use value' in delivering their own political objectives. This is short term, because Governments and policy change, and is destructive to a long term commitment to safeguard our culture.

A robust society needs a complete culture and should SUPPORT it in all its forms not just what appears useful or the most popular.

### **2. WHO are the artists, where do they fit into that pattern.**

Artists are individuals within society with particular sensibilities, talents, skills and training ( 70% are trained to post graduate level) who become the professionals who, to put it simplistically, hold up those mirrors by utilizing a very wide range of contemporary arts practice.

Artists do not need to be 'brought-in' to the community they ARE community, they are already here they couldn't do their job otherwise, but they need to be noticed, valued and rewarded.

### 3 . What is the Visual Arts infra-structure

It falls into two categories working in conjunction to a greater or lesser extent.

1. VISUAL ARTISTS. They usually work as individuals; they work creatively across a wide range of media and creative platforms, sometimes collaboratively with artists in other sectors. They engage with communities and audiences across Scotland and internationally.

2. The ENABLING AND PROVISIONING visual arts infrastructure. This group is very large and includes cultural ministers and conveners, local authority officers, arts administrators, arts officers, curators, directors, educators, gallerists, arts writers and publishers, accountants, researchers, office managers and staff, invigilators, security staff, cleaners etc , plus the buildings they occupy. This infrastructure absorbs approximately 90% of the visual arts funding. They enable art, its presentation, its critical position, and its education but they are all dependent on the creative output of artists for their employment. Workers in the infra-structure enable art - often in partnership with artists - BUT they do not create it.

### 4. What are the relative economic values within the visual arts sector ?

Currently those working in the larger infra-structure all receive a living wage, yet the people they are dependent on – the artists- are not only the worst paid and the least valued in the visual arts sector , but across all arts platforms

An estimated 5,000 visual artists are practicing in Scotland and a recent Artists' Audit conducted on behalf of the Scottish Arts Council showed that 82% of visual artists in Scotland earn £5,000 or less from their artistic practice, 8% earn £10,000. while 28% of artists make nothing from their practice. This can be compared with a national average wage of £25,000.

Additionally, the audit shows that while The Scottish Arts Council spend £3.2 million annually on visual arts including all core funded organizations, by

comparison (assuming there to be 5,000 artists practicing in Scotland and extrapolating the figures from 500 surveyed) £22 million is spent by artists on the material needs of their practice .

The Scottish Artists Union's requirement for a robust, healthy and forward looking Visual arts sector is PARITY for artists.

Indeed we believe we cannot achieve a robust sector without it. How can the these two essential groups ( the infrastructure and the creative producers) work together productively when they are rewarded and valued so differently.

## **PART 2.**

### **What does Parity involve?**

Achieving Parity will include addressing financial reward, acknowledgement of the role played by artists, according artistic practice with its TRUE value rather than 'Use value', and support for the specific and unique working practices of artists.

The Scottish Artists Union is currently addressing the working practices of Visual artists and list below specific areas of research and their current findings.

#### **1. INCOME**

There is no single model for artist's income. Artists generally obtain income from fragmented sources, which can change according to the availability of work and the need to have periods of undisturbed studio practice. Income can be derived from short term contracts within the community, health and education sectors; part time teaching within art schools and community sectors; part time, short term administration posts; gallery invigilation; sale of work in commercial galleries; commissions; exhibition payment rights; funded residencies; project funding and artists awards; and the Dole - this last being crucial for very many artists in the years immediately following art school. Indeed many now internationally renowned artists state that they were only able to continue their artistic practice in their early years through receipt of benefit related support.

Such an irregular and disparate form of income gathering does not allow normal life planning – like obtaining mortgages and starting a family, it creates a sector of individuals who feel disenfranchised and insecure, and who spend much of their life seeking employment and juggling their finances. They usually remain without insurance or pension provision. Some artists do establish a measure of regularity within this system, but the majority do not and as the SAC audit showed, they are often dependent on support from other members of their family in order to continue creating.

A further issue is that there is no regulation on rates of pay or working conditions across so many forms of employment. There are numerous reports of underpayment and poor working arrangements and contracts.

We believe that the adoption of a minimum rate of pay across all these sectors, which values artists as professionals would have immediate benefit. To this end the SAU have produced a Rates of Pay document for sessional and short term contracts which it is currently promoting.

Because of their low income levels artists have been dependent on SAC artists awards and project funding. The inadequacy of funds to meet the needs in this sector has been apparent for several years, and perhaps even more importantly, the linking of awards to the Scottish Executives 'button pushing' political objectives has been seen as totally detrimental to the full development of artistic creativity.

Currently 10 –25% of applications by visual artists to SAC receive awards, but up 75-80% of applications are said to be eligible and of sufficient merit. Clearly this represents serious underfunding.

WE believe that generously funded artists awards schemes , broadly delivered according to artistic value rather than the fulfilling of political objectives, is paramount in addressing financial Parity for artists. We believe that artists should be fully involved in award making decisions. The removal of SAC selection and appraisal committees which included artist representatives is seen as a totally negative move designed to remove evaluation from the sector itself, putting the base value further back onto data and management.

## 2. SELLING

Artists selling their work through commercial sources, are currently severely disadvantaged by an anomaly in the VAT system. We understand that VAT is a reserved issue, but a recommendation could come from the Scottish Executive to investigate changes to the system.

When the total selling price of an artists work , from all sources, reaches £58,000 the artist must register for VAT. However that selling price includes gallery commission, now normally 50%, so the artist must register when their actual income is only £29,000 which represents a pre tax income of approximately £15,000. So just when that artist reaches a point where they could see an income being established, they are faced with an immediate increase in sales price and the additional burden and cost of implementing a VAT system.

WE believe that artists would significantly benefit from VAT being implemented on their sales income calculated after deduction of gallery commission.

TAX : although very many artists in Scotland do not pay personal tax due to their low income levels, specific systems to support artists in countries such as Ireland and Sweden should be examined as possible role models. This might also include tax breaks for companies supporting/sponsoring the arts and gallery purchasing schemes.

### 3. MARKETING

Currently publicly funded galleries do not cultivate a market for so called 'more difficult' work. This work is not found difficult in other countries where a market exists for contemporary practice.

We believe that core funded galleries should be required to develop marketing strategies for living artists work. In addition, providing incentives for private purchase schemes such as National Purchase Plan or Percentage for Art, would assist artists to personally increase their income. However pushing 'enterprise culture' where artists are seen merely to be commercial producers must be fought against. The integrity of art must be preserved. Education of and within the market place should be prioritized rather than lowering the integrity of the art.

### 4.. COMMUNITY PRACTICE

The support structures for artists working in community situations are currently a matter of pure luck. There are no guidelines on appropriate levels of training and support for artists who can be asked to work with groups as disparate as long term prisoners, groups with severe mental health problems, outsider youth groups or epileptics. In

addition because they are not professionals in those sectors, they are frequently paid as temporary staff rather than the arts professionals they are. As self employed individuals they are also generally required to have their own public liability insurance, now often to a level of £3 million. They cannot afford this, and often cannot even obtain it.

WE recommend that a form of best practice for the employment of artists is urgently established and implemented across all sectors as a requirement of cultural funding going to that sector. And that Insurance should be provided by the employer.

To further integrate art and community as the Scottish executive aim, would be best achieved by supporting integrated local networks of artists and existing provisions rather than the imposition of legally binding yet unachievable Government directives . For example a scheme which would also benefit artists would be the provision locally, across the country , of exhibition spaces to showcase the work of local artists. and act as a resource for community sectors wanting to work with local artists. Local forums could be set up regularly, allowing. artists, the public, galleries and curators, council members, teachers, and business interest to discuss and better understand each others' needs .

Support local existing frameworks allowing integrated provision to grow. We do not need legal rights to culture, we already have intrinsic rights to our own culture. We need wider availability together with public education and encouragement.

#### 4 . STUDIO WORK

If society is to benefit from the integration of artists within community life, then it MUST be understood that an artists own practice is an integral part of that process.

Studio work is the time when artists regenerate their creativity, develop new skills, and refine their ideas. This is the research end of their professional practice. This must be universally understood and valued . Without this there will be no continuity of the excellent work currently being undertaken in the community.

Artists require support and assistance, particularly at local Government level for the provision of reasonably priced studios in rural areas and in central urban locations.

The need to sustain studio practice must be understood and valued and provided for. It is the root of the creative activity of artists on which the rest of the sector is dependent.

## 5. EDUCATION

Visual artists are increasingly providing art projects and events within the broad educational sector, in schools , galleries and community.

Artists must be remunerated as arts professionals taking their experience into account. Best practice and working conditions must be established.

Artists themselves, at certain times in their career do need on-going developmental mentoring and professional development training. However artists should also be employed to DELIVER such training .

The formal provision of art within primary and secondary schools is inadequate and underfunded – with a few exceptions. Practicing artists should NOT be employed as cheap alternatives the fill the gaps in provision or to deliver the curriculum, this should be provided by the education sector. They should be employed as additional professionals able to deliver specific creative projects and new dimensions and skills.

### **PART 3**

#### A response to specific questions posed by the Cultural Commission.

- Encouraging creativity: What is the best way to maximise the creative
- potential of the people of Scotland?

The most straightforward means of stimulating people's creativity is to allow them DIRECT contact and dialogue with peoples who are themselves highly creative, i.e artists and professional creative practitioners. This can be done through informal work with galleries, schools and community groups, where the artist makes personal and inspirational contact encouraging interaction with the world through creative skills in an all encompassing manner.

In addition formal and more deeply researched and structured partnerships can bring a creative, positive, imaginative influence to the thinking processes within areas of business, education and public sectors . Artists have the most astounding powers of resourcefulness, sustainability, problem solving, conflict resolution and personal stamina to offer society, but in return ask to be valued and rewarded in line with other professional workers.

Artists should be regularly consulted during policy-making on subjects that concern them and their practice; the current dialogue between creative people and the Scottish Executive, should be an on-going and constructive debate to broaden our horizons and set far higher goals for society and its full cultural activity.

**Pouring money into infrastructures does not in itself generate creativity, but support for risk taking and good ideas does.**

**Creativity involves risk . Without risk there is no creativity. Funders must understand the true nature of risk.**

Education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

Positively integrate the teaching and appreciation of the visual arts into the schools curriculum starting at primary school.

Support and encourage imaginative contemporary art practice in schools beyond standard curriculum requirement.

Allow children to openly experience art galleries, museums and arts practices as a basic building block to understanding how their society works .

Ensure the emphasis of creative learning in art schools is balanced. This should be a place where students can take risks and fail as part of a route to success.

Encourage students to investigate creativity through mediums and process in physical workshop and studio activities - rather than moving towards a purely measurable academic approach.

Art schools should develop an extensive learning program covering all practical aspects of arts .

Arts training in specialist subjects should be made readily accessible and available to most communities through open workshops.

Artists should visit and teach in school environments as professional practicing artists and not as stand-in art teachers . Artists have a unique approach that they can bring into any teaching environment and this should be valued.

Marketing and promotion: How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and the public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

Start by supporting the existing grass roots arts activity. Visual artists are already working presenting arts activity in empty shop spaces, their own flats, empty local property, and environmental spaces. They are independently increasing the profile of artists and the arts at ground level.

The grass roots activity utilizes huge amounts of creative energy, is diverse and pluralistic in its activity and is beginning to spread outward from the central belt into rural and remote areas. It is totally shortsighted NOT to support this energy which is already providing much of what the Scottish Executive claims to be seeking.

Promote 'intelligent' coverage of the contemporary arts by the media who, within the visual arts, seems attracted only to the sensational.

The institutional infrastructure: How best to organise and support the cultural sector in Scotland to deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?

SAU believes that a Ministry of Culture separated from Sport and Tourism is essential. That a cultural civil service sector with established and professional knowledge of the arts infrastructure that can be carried between changing ministers or governments would be valuable.

We believe that arts funding should be administered at arms length from Government directives. The arts should not be a tool for the implementations of political objectives.

We suggest a central administrative agency which could allocate ring-fenced funds to the community and public sectors for the administration of their own cultural activities. This would in turn be dependent on maintaining proper payments and working practices for artists across all platforms.

Funding should be allocated to local authorities for local initiatives. Such a system would create a knowledgeable central agency working in partnership with other sectors, while leaving scope for local initiatives to respond to local need.

A central award giving agency for artists, should be supported in its decision making by artists representing all disciplines and geographic locations.

It would be beneficial for the central agency to have some parts of its activity based outwith the central belt.

Politicians are keen to point out the high international standing of visual artists from Scotland. The majority of these artists have reached this standing through their own initiatives, totally unfunded from Scotland which currently has no funds available to support artists working abroad.

Any international funding coming online in Scotland MUST acknowledge the activity of artists by having open applications funds rather than supporting only closed enterprise type initiatives.

### What is maximum value? What is value?

Recently published papers written by senior managers within the cultural sector, show a clear opposition to current political directives for culture.

Their opposition centres on the fact that values currently applied to the arts are based entirely on economic factors, the belief that there must be quantifiable value for money. Quantifiable means data and this is being collected in ever greater amounts on ever more topics usually relating to such factors as audience profiles and education targets, but never asking the most relevant questions about the work being presented or the personal benefit for the audience. Not only is this creating an escalating financial burden and work load on organizations and individuals, but it is seen to fail totally to assess 'real values'. As one writer says it 'only quantifies that which is quantifiable'. In other words this burden has a demoralizing and flattening effect on the arts without ever attaining its stated purpose.

Whilst we do not doubt the value of the arts within society or oppose genuine expansion of the connections between artists and the community, we also have to fight against that as the sole economic value system by which all arts funding and artistic value is measured.

However where this added value from the arts for the community sectors is acknowledged, then there must be strong parallel commitment of support for the arts and artists by those sectors.

Appended: Rate of Pay Synopsis  
Model of Practice and Income

## Scottish Artists Union

### Models of Practice and Income 2004

Artists typically work with a wide range of media and across multiple arenas. There is no single model for practice or income. The common factor is fragmentation and diversity. The current policy of 'art inclusion' is providing artists with new areas of employment and extends the scope of their practice but it also creates additional fragmentation.

Typically Visual artists work within the framework outlined below:

STUDIO TIME:	This is the research & development time of an artists practice: UNFUNDED
EXHIBITING: Commercial -	selling galleries: private sales internet:
Non commercial	publicly funded galleries: alternative & artist run galleries and spaces competitive exhibitions selected exhibitions
COMMISSIONS	Private Business Local authority/ public spaces & buildings Public gallery commission of new work Competitive or invited architectural work
INSTALLATION	temporary works in non commercial galleries Events ( festivals etc) Collaborations with other art forms
RESIDENCIES	Competitive or Invited Sometimes art based ( artists own development) Often community based. National and International by competitive Application
COLLABORATION	Invited , competitive or self initiated work often with other art sectors; dance, performance, music
SHORT TERM & SESSIONAL PROJECTS.	Mainly within the Community & Education sectors. Education, Schools, Art Schools, Continuing education Health – hospitals – disability Local Authority Outreach projects (consultancy or gallery led) Prisons Artists own initiated projects.

## INCOME MODEL.

While a very small number of high profile artists do make a living from one source – typically famous painters - most artists, including many internationally renowned contemporary artists, derive their income from a variety of the sources outlined above.

Because of the short term nature of most projects and a reluctance of organizations to commit to long term work patterns, artists are typically unable to plan either their working pattern or their income. They spend much time seeking employment opportunities and juggling finances.

Their working pattern is dependent on opportunities arising and their successful applications often in a highly competitive arena. This makes long term financial commitments impossible and life choices like having children often force artists to seek full time employment elsewhere thus losing highly trained ( 70% to post graduate level) and creative practitioners. Many artists are supported by another family member in order to continue with their practice.

In addition rates of pay across these numerous sectors are highly variable and frequently below the rates paid to other professionals working in those sectors. The levels of training and support provided to artists working in these different environments is generally inadequate or totally non existent.

As self-employed professionals, Artists are generally expected to provide their own insurance for public liability up to £3 million. They cannot afford this and frequently cannot even obtain it. Few artists can afford Pension provision.

The Scottish Artists Union is URGENTLY promoting a Rates of Pay document outlining minimum rates for Visual artists to be endorsed and implemented across all sectors.

The Scottish Artists Union wishes to see the establishment and implementation of a set of Best Practice guidelines governing the employment of artists in all public sectors.

SYNOPSIS.



### **Recommended National Rates of Pay for Visual & Applied Artists in Scotland 2004-06**

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The following rates should apply to all aspects of contracted work, from project planning and development to workshop setting up, execution and clear up.

All hours worked should be accounted for.

Properly costed travel expenses should be paid over and above all fees.

All costs for the supply/hire of equipment should be paid over and above all fees.

#### **HOURLY AND SESSIONAL RATES OF PAY**

**Hourly Rates:**            **£16.25 p/hr minimum**  
                                 **£21.50 p/hr minimum with 3 yrs + experience**  
                                 **£26.75 p/hr minimum with 5 yrs + experience**

**Sessional Rates:**    **£108 p/day (£54 p/1/2 day) minimum**  
                                 **£161 p/day (£81 p/1/2 day) minimum with 3 yrs**  
                                 **experience**  
                                 **£214 p/day (£107 p/1/2 day) minimum with 5 yrs +**  
                                 **experience**

These rates are recommended minimum rates relating to qualifications /experience, which are defined by 'years as a working artist', and would be evidenced by a professional CV and references, as is the convention in other employment contracts. All artists retain the right to negotiate rates of pay over and above these guidelines.

#### **ARTISTS' RESIDENCIES**

**Residency Rates:**    **£16,200 p/annum (pro rata) min.**  
                                 **£27,000 p/annum (pro rata) with 5 years+ experience**

All residencies should be calculated on a pro rata basis where the residency exceeds 20 working days.

Placing within this scale will be negotiated based on career history and experience. All artists retain the right to negotiate rates of pay over and above these guidelines.

Bi-annually at the SAU Annual General Meeting these figures will be reviewed and as a minimum, be increased in line with bi-annual inflation figures.