

Ack letter sent 18/01/05

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From Dr Ian McKenzie Smith, OBE



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James Boyle  
Chairman  
Cultural Commission  
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The  
Royal  
Scottish  
Academy

30 November 2004

Dear James,

Following your meeting with The Royal Scottish Academy Council in late September, I now enclose our submission to the Cultural Commission as promised.

As work continues, the RSA will be pleased to respond to any further invitations and enlarge upon any aspect of our submission should you require it.

The Commission's Interim Report reflects prodigious effort and we shall look forward with great interest to further reports in the spring.

With best wishes,

Ian McKenzie Smith  
President



# The Royal Scottish Academy

## ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY

### Submission to the Cultural Commission

In an ever more competitive world, the country's economic survival will depend on our ability to re-examine policies and strategies and more vitally the thinking and philosophies which guide our actions. Within the framework of the art world, it will become necessary to maximise our use of resources and shape our infrastructure to be more effective. With these objectives in mind, the Royal Scottish Academy is pleased to respond to the Cultural Commission and welcomes this opportunity to make observations which we hope will prove helpful.

The Royal Scottish Academy is a unique organisation of living artists, financially independent, self-standing and self-sufficient. The Institution has a long and stable history and is well positioned through its' independence to provide an objective view.

Academicians are elected by their peers and are located throughout Scotland from the Orkneys to the Borders while our Honorary Membership includes a distinguished body of International artists. Our Membership encompasses a diversity of professional expertise in Fine Art and Architecture, and Members are active throughout Scotland's Cultural Institutions. We provide input to the Governing bodies, Boards of Management and Committees of the National Galleries, the Scottish Arts Council and many of its client organisations, the National Trust and the Royal Fine Art Commission to name but a few. The Academy itself is one of very few bodies within the cultural sector which is not dependant directly or indirectly on Government funding, local or national.

The Academy occupies its premises in the centre of Edinburgh jointly with the National Galleries of Scotland. The building was transferred to the National Galleries along with the Academy's collection of Master drawings in exchange for occupancy in perpetuity. Traditionally, the public face of the Academy has been its Annual Exhibition and Exhibition of Student work. We have also been a conduit for support to young artists and those in difficulty through age or infirmity. The Academy is in a period of development and change opening our disciplinary base from Painting, Sculpture and Architecture to Art and Architecture allowing for the election of a wider range of artists involved in Installation, Photography, Film and Performance. We have established a program of vibrant project- based exhibitions opening up issues around collaboration, archiving, and how artists work and interact with their public. This provides an exciting and contemporary balance to the major historical surveys shown in the same building by the National Galleries.

There is a continuing need to build the audience for all aspects of the arts. In its widest sense, it is important that a society is perceived to be culturally and intellectually aware. A progressive image impacts positively on all our Country's endeavour and aspirations. Consequently, while it is vital to increase participation in all art forms, both traditional and modern, it is certain that a progressive society needs vibrant contemporary art, and it is essential that there is a receptive audience. This should start in our primary and

secondary schools. For some decades now, much attention in schools has been directed towards developing familiarity with access and information. Courses have been focussed on building a knowledge base as the most likely way to achieve career success and financial rewards. We contend that education should mean comprehending a dynamic where information and thinking are interdependent and that creativity and imaginative thinking are as important as knowledge. Evolving a holistic approach in schools would foster wider interests and aspiration in our young people.

There are strong reservations about the efficacy of a funding body being the sole arbiter of cultural policy and priority. As an independent organisation, we feel that the RSA can provide advocacy and a platform for debate.

An informed arts lobby in Scotland would bring together poets, writers, musicians, performing and visual artists. Additionally, interaction between art and academic research activity represents a considerable potential source of energy and innovation. We can facilitate debate between research and education, artists and the public.

There is an enormous amount of cultural activity, nationally and internationally, however there is also a great deal of fragmentation of effort. By developing some shared objectives and a simple information exchange across institutions both international and national activity could be greatly enhanced.

We feel that particular attention should be given to the following points:

- The Commission should pause to reflect on the sound principles of access, inclusion and education that drove the establishments of CEMA, ACGB and SAC.
- The creative disciplines of visual art, music, writing and dance should be more strongly emphasised throughout the education system from primary to doctoral study and research funding in further and higher education should be aligned more closely to levels enjoyed by the sciences.
- The primacy of the creative originator should be recognised and given due consideration, status and remuneration and the differences should be acknowledged between the artist, choreographer, writer and composer and those who then interpret or present their work- the curator, conductor, actor, musician and dancer.
- The true geographic spread within Scotland should be acknowledged, supported and promoted- not just the Central Belt and the Gaeltacht, but also the Northern Isles, the Northeast and the Borders. Links particularly with the Scottish diaspora should be fostered and Scottish artists encouraged and enabled to bring their work to a wider International audience.
- All forms of visual art should be seen as worthy of support; indigenous, traditional, minority and outsider along with the obviously contemporary and cutting edge.
- Artists of all ages and cultural backgrounds in Scotland should have the same access to promotion and support resulting in an audience that has access to a wider range of choice.

- The imbalance between the arts and sciences in all levels of education should be recognised and the importance of creativity in the school curriculum should be emphasised and supported.
- A balanced view should be taken on the funding requirements of the individual practitioner, the facilities that support their practice and the institutions that present their work to a wider public.
- Bodies charged with dispersing government support locally and nationally should be truly representative of the range of practitioners, curators, educators, historians and theorists and of course audiences, throughout Scotland.

Professor Bill Scott RSA, Professor Ian Howard RSA and Arthur Watson ARSA  
On behalf of The Royal Scottish Academy