

# engage

in the visual arts

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Cultural Commission  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
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4 April 5, 2005

11 APR 2005

Dear Cultural Commission

Please find enclosed a further submission from **engage**.

**engage** is an international membership association based in the UK with members in over 20 countries, in over 500 arts centres, galleries, museums, working face-to-face with over 2 million pupils and gallery visitors annually.

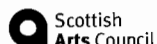
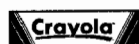
I have also enclosed a press release announcing our new partnership with the Scottish Executive's National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being on the **engage** Scotland Visual Arts Education Awards 2005.

Best wishes

  
Christopher Naylor  
Director

**Patrons** Gillian Ayres OBE Brian Eno Sue Grayson Ford David Hockney CH Lord Hutchinson of Lullington QC Rt. Hon. Chris Smith MP  
Professor Helen Storey **Chair** Michael Tooby **Director** Christopher Naylor

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LOTTERY FUNDED  
CERFNGOI CREADHORWYDDO  
CYNGOR CEIFYDDYDAU CYMRU  
THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES  
SUPPORTING CREATIVITY

Monday 4 April 2005

Dear James Boyle & Cultural Commission Colleagues

**Further response from engage Director Christopher Naylor March 2005**

This response relates to the Cultural Commission interim report and extends a further invitation from **engage** to access visual arts education professionals – a key sector for realising cultural entitlement.

3.1 and 4.2 'Learning' and 'Developing Talent'

Whilst chiming with many of the assertions in these sections, **engage** would encourage an explicit reference to the need for 'cultural education', ie equipping and empowering pupils (and those outside of formal education) and helping them feel confident in making use of cultural institutions and resources.

There is a different key aim between a school curriculum focused use of cultural resources - *'lets go to the gallery, they've got a relevant show on'* (visual art as resource / support) and the focus on individual creative talent - *'lets go to the gallery - it might inspire'* (art as nourishment), or indeed *'it might one day show your art work'* (art as potential career).

Cultural education should be about equipping all pupils of all abilities and interests to get the maximum out of public funded resources, as pupils should similarly be equipped to get the most out of health services, citizens advice services, etc.

3.3 'Museums and galleries' – this requires to address the vibrant changing exhibition programmes in Scotland and not refer solely to collection based art.

This is currently only phrased in terms of collections and needs to expressly include different art contexts - changing programmes in galleries, new commissions, and also cross arts potential in arts centres. Many of the visual art venues in Scotland programme several exhibitions a year, often new works. The report on the visual arts in Scotland, commissioned by VAGA (Visual Art Gallery Association) offers data on this.

It would also be beneficial here to highlight the different contribution of working with 'new' art, with living artists and contemporary works, and contemporary art and artists particular ability to stimulate participation and response. Further, contemporary art and artists can bring new meaning (or encourage new responses in visitors) to museum and gallery collections.

**engage** would be keen to offer the commission access to a wide membership of gallery educators, artists educators and artists, driven by the transformative experiences that working with contemporary art and artists can bring.

### 3.16 Para 3 - 'energising the grass roots'

**engage** would encourage a greater awareness of the 'brokerage' roles of gallery educators (and other cultural education staff). These are individuals trained and equipped to work with a wide scope of individuals and groups to help them (*help themselves to*) explore and develop gallery projects.

There are many examples of this work and **engage** would encourage the Cultural

Commission to address this vital area of realising cultural entitlements.

Further thought about how to 'energise' should take into account existing methods and networks and how these with a little extra funding could play a significant role in extending grassroots programmes, in a supportive rather than a 'top-down' style. Pumping energy into the grass roots will ultimately need educators, brokers, mediators who can help interface with and build access to relevant artists and venues.

### 3.7 'International context'

Participation in the 'world cultural stage' not just an issue for artists. Other arts practitioners eg creative educators also crucially need to share practice internationally - this is about inspiration, dynamism, and critical mass.

**engage** see a real need for educators to work internationally, bringing back enthusiasm, contacts, new ways of working and advocating on an international stage for the visual arts in Scotland and the exciting potential of cultural entitlement.

#### **engage** contact details

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