FOOTFALL
REPORT

ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF ARTIST LED ORGANISATIONS IN IRELAND

FOOTFALL: Articulating the Value of Artist Led Organisations in Ireland

Antrim/Down:
- 56 South Studios
- Catalyst Arts
- The Engine Room Gallery
- Golden Thread Gallery
- Platform Arts
- PRIME
- PS²

Mayo:
- Custom House Studios & Gallery

Galway:
- 126 Artist Run Gallery

Offaly:
- The Good Hatchery

Kildare:
- Unit 1

Dublin:
- Basic Space
- BLOCK T
- Flatpack Gallery & Studios
- FLOOD
- The Joinery
- Market Studios
- MART
- Monster Truck Gallery & Studios
- NAStudios
- Pallas Projects/Studios
- Steam Box
- Talbot Gallery & Studios
- Temple Bar Gallery + Studios

Clare:
- Courthouse Studios & Gallery

Limerick:
- Askeaton Contemporary Arts
- Occupy Space
- Ormston House

Cork:
- Guest House
- Tactic
- The Black Mariah

Waterford:
- Hive Emerging
- Soma Contemporay

FOOTFALL: Articulating the Value of Artist Led Organisations in Ireland

Foreword

In August 2014, I was approached by the board of 126 Artist-Run Gallery Galway, to write a report based on research 126 had initiated into the value of artist led organisations in Ireland. Given my interest in this field and my awareness of a lack of timely research on the subject in an Irish context, I happily accepted. Over the course of writing the report, I have met many people engaged in diverse aspects of the artist led sector, from volunteers and activists to academic researchers and artists. My overriding impressions are of a pragmatic, ambitious and agile sector, which is based on the social capital of cooperative networks, and motivated by an unwavering fidelity to artistic practice.

This report summarises a large body of primary research conducted over 12 months. In light of ongoing funding cuts within the arts sector as a whole, FOOTFALL represents a rare opportunity to hear from the workers, artists, audiences and representatives of small, not for profit, artist led organisations across the country. As report writer, I would like to thank Research Coordinator Shelly McDonnell, Research Administrator Allison Regan, and the members of the Research Steering Committee who invited me onboard and provided support, advice and guidance throughout the writing phase.

On behalf of the FOOTFALL research team, I would like to sincerely thank all of the individuals, audiences and ex-board members who participated in this research. Their contributions and insights were hugely important to the programme of research as it unfolded. In addition, we would like to thank those involved in organising, facilitating and hosting the FOOTFALL symposium, including our invited speakers and mediators.

Above all, we would like to extend our gratitude to the artist led organisations across Ireland and Northern Ireland, who gave so generously of their time contributing to the research, attending FOOTFALL events and telling the stories of their diverse initiatives. Despite the obstacles of geography, limited resources and time constraints, these organisations recognised the value in what we were trying to achieve, and showed faith in us, epitomising the ethos of trust and cooperation upon which the artist led sector is founded.

Joanne Laws, Arts Writer
January 2015

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CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

1.1: Introduction

An implicit understanding of the role and value of small organisations, both in the cultural sector and society as a whole, has long existed among arts professionals, yet it remains at odds with the metrics of government and many funders, whose measures for audience and income development serve to de-emphasise the potential of these organisations.
Sarah Thelwall for Common Practice (2011)

Self-organisation and artist led culture have become increasingly prominent formations within the visual arts in Ireland over the last 40 years, though this diverse history remains only sporadically documented. The emergence of artist-run spaces and collectives in Ireland and Northern Ireland since the 1970's has echoed similar developments taking place internationally - from Glasgow to New York - whose 'self-defined' activity often uses 'the institution' as a catalyst for devising new modes of production (Bradley, 2014). Generally surfacing in response to perceived 'lacks' within existing infrastructures and cultural amenities, the role of artist-led activity has featured prominently in the discourse surrounding urban regeneration and gentrification since the late 1990's. In light of current critical debate on precarity and flexible labour under globalisation, the position of artistic labour has re-surfaced and been subject to scrutiny. Until recently, the role of artist led organisations has only been tentatively understood by funders and those who benefit from artist led activity. However, recently published research, supported by primary data on the subject, has asserted that the activities of artist led organisations are 'as vital to a healthy visual art ecosystem as those of larger institutions' (Thelwall, 2011: 6).

Focusing on the Irish context, the FOOTFALL report outlines the reasons why artist led organisations are established, how they are run and the type of work they do. Those perceived to benefit from this work, and the inherent 'value' of such activity, will be discussed. Drawing on emerging discourse in the field, possible methods for measuring 'non-economic' value will be presented. The perceived strengths of artist led organisations will be identified, followed by a discussion of the central issues of sustainability and artistic labour. The report will conclude with some thoughts on whether there is a need for further organisational forms within the artist led sector in Ireland.

FOOTFALL does not aim to represent the agenda(s) of artist led organisations in Ireland but rather to generate an enquiry into the value of the labour invested in running them. It is envisaged that the report will be nationally relevant to current and future artist led organisations, funding bodies, arts policy makers and researchers.

Rationale

The FOOTFALL research was initiated in 2013 by the 126 Board, in response to a funding crisis that had almost resulted in its closure during the previous year. The Board, chaired by Ann Marie McKee, devised the original research proposal, and were awarded funding under Strand 2 of the Arts Council of Ireland Project Award. In January 2014, the timeline of the research project was extended, thus allowing for further preparatory research and the identification of potential international precedents.

As outlined by the National Campaign for the Arts in their 'Position on Research':

Those working in not-for-profit or non-profit contexts typically struggle to afford to commission the kinds of sectoral research that are needed to properly inform policy and underpin decisions.
(NCFA, 2013.b:1).

Consequently, the Arts Council funding has presented FOOTFALL with a rare opportunity to not only make visible the work done by artist led organisations in Ireland, but to begin to articulate the value of this activity 'in a modern democracy'
(NCFA, 2013.b: 1).

Research Aims

As a collaborative national research project, FOOTFALL aims to:

• Explore the position of small visual arts organisations in Ireland
  (why they are formed, how they are run and the work they do).
• Contribute to an understanding of the role of artist led organisations
  within the contemporary visual arts sector in Ireland.
• Explore levels of audience engagement.
• Examine what separates the activities of artist-led organisations
  from those of other larger art institutions, and what role they play
  in artists' careers.
• Initiate an inquiry into the value of voluntary labour invested in
  artist led sector.
• Develop new, nuanced means to articulate the value of the work
  done by these diverse organisations.
• Advocate for further research into new ways of measuring the
  value of artist led organisations in Ireland, beyond economic
  metrics and attendance figures.

FOOTFALL Research Committee

Shelly McDonnell (Research Co-ordinator and Chairperson 126)
Joanne Laws (Report Writer)
Allison Regan (Researcher)
Ciaron Fitzpatrick (Graphic Design & Statistical Presentation)
Kevin Lynch (Data Visualisation)
Lucy Elvis (Proof-reading)
Anne-Marie McKee (Initial Project Development)
Megs Morley (Initial Project Development; Research Advisor; Symposium
Co-coordinator; 126 Advisory Board, Galway City Curator-in-Residence 2014/15)
Sarah Searson (Initial Project Development; 126 Advisory Board; Former
Head of GMIT Centre for Creative Arts & Media and Current Director of
The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon)

FOOTFALL Symposium Invited Speakers

Jason. E Bowman
Valerie Connor
Mikael Löfgren
Ailbhe Murphy and Ciaran Smyth (Vagabond Reviews)

Symposium Host

TULCA Festival of Visual Art 2014

Symposium Assistants

Marcel Badia
Jackie Burke
Carol Anne Connolly
Jason Dunne
Phil Foley
Grace Mitchell
Allison Regan
Peter Sherry
Joan Sugrue
Eoghain Wynne

Symposium Moderators

Mitch Conlon
Kerry Guinan
Anne Marie McKee
Christine Mullan
Dobz O'Brien
Orlaith Treacy

Symposium Documentation

Jonathan Sammon
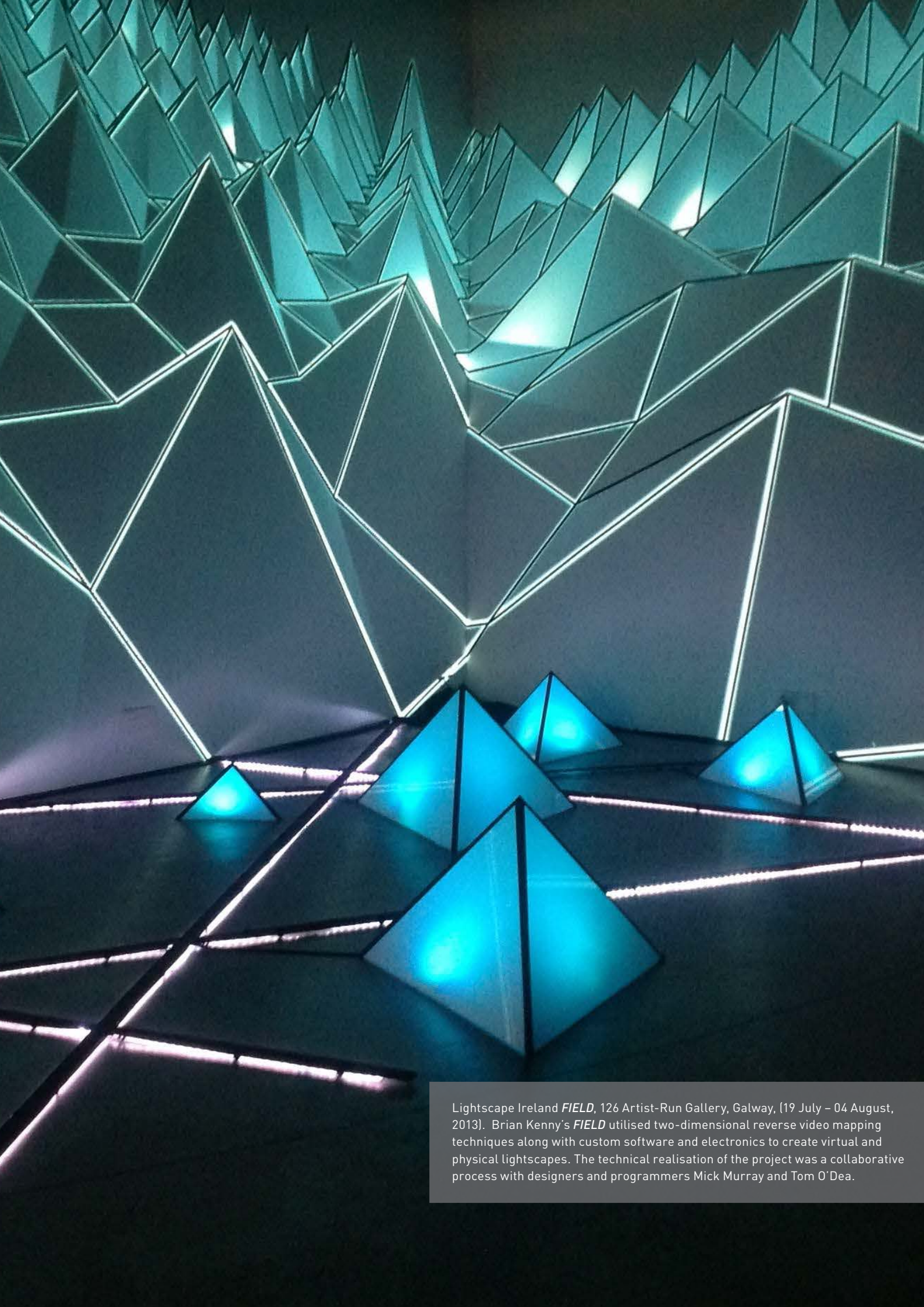
Lightscape Ireland *FIELD*, 126 Artist-Run Gallery, Galway, (19 July – 04 August, 2013). Brian Kenny's *FIELD* utilised two-dimensional reverse video mapping techniques along with custom software and electronics to create virtual and physical lightscapes. The technical realisation of the project was a collaborative process with designers and programmers Mick Murray and Tom O'Dea.

1.2: 126 Artist-Run Gallery

126 Artist-Run Gallery was established by local artists in 2005, in response to what was perceived as an urgent need for non-commercial gallery spaces in Galway. Founded on the successful democratic models of Catalyst Arts Gallery (Belfast) and Transmission Gallery (Glasgow), 126 is managed by a voluntary board of professional artists, whereby each board member can serve up to two years before being replaced. The Board promotes the ideology of the membership, as laid out in the organisation's aims, through the activities of 126. Key to the support and running of the gallery are its members, who are directly represented by the Board. 126 provides a platform for individuals to connect with a larger network of professional artists. This structural dynamic creates the longevity upon which 126 is based.

126 delivers an annual programme of contemporary visual art exhibitions, members' shows, talks, workshops, events, national and international off-site residencies and research projects. The gallery's focus is to support emerging contemporary practices and partnerships, by creating exhibition, commission and development opportunities that prioritise criticality and experimentation.

126 Artist-Run Gallery aims to:

- Maintain a central permanent exhibition space and resource centre for all visual artists.
- Provide a unique platform within Galway for the presentation of art works that are risk-taking, experimental, in-progress, and otherwise not normally represented by commercial galleries or larger institutions.
- Present diverse programming, ranging from established to emerging artists, international to local practitioners and conventional to new media.
- Initiate projects outside of the gallery using the office as the contact point for organisation and administration.
- Encourage a growth in the visual arts in Galway and in critical discourse in Ireland.
- Develop an information and support network through its membership.
- Offer support for art college students and recent graduates by promoting unique exhibition opportunities and feedback on their work.
- Distinguish itself from other Galway-based visual art bodies as an artist-run and democratic organisation, thus making decisions on an artistic not economic basis.
- Emerge as national leaders at the forefront of contemporary art by ambitiously pursuing excellence in all areas of our programme.
- Promote international exchanges of artists and ideas.

Tracing Artists

'Tracing Artists' is an ongoing research project initiated by 126, which aims to reconnect with artists and organisations who have worked with the gallery since it was established in 2005. Informed by 126 archives, project documentation, web-based research and oral histories, the research aims to devise a network of artists, galleries and arts organisations, and find ways of presenting these findings in visual form, using the principals of deep mapping.

Such data will trace the impact and valuable influence of smaller arts organisations on the trajectories of artists' practice and future careers. Further to the findings of FOOTFALL, this research will provide the basis for an upcoming quaterly publication, that will be produced throughout 2015, reflecting the 10 year history and the current activities of 126.

Lajeunesse Collective (Sara Amido and Clare Breen) 'I Have a Lot of Feelings' (2014), Block T, Dublin, (04 – 24 July 2014). This artwork was originally commissioned by Occupy Space, Limerick in 2014. Image courtesy of Tadhg Nathan and Block T.

1.3: Context

As already identified in the foreword, there is currently a distinct lack of research addressing either the historical trajectory or the contemporary situation of artist led organisations in Ireland. A few isolated articles have been generated on the subject, but these are sporadic and largely the result of individual effort, such as academic inquiry (Byrne et al. 2005), artist led publishing (Morley, 2012) and broader interrogations of artist led cultures within urban space (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Jewesbury, 1998), rather than any sustained or comprehensive programme of research. Consequently, a review of existing literature for FOOTFALL has focused largely on international precedents, in order to get a sense of the main issues within the sector, as well as the research methods that have been successfully employed to present this discourse to wider audiences. The previous and ongoing research activities (including publications and conferences) of U.K based initiatives such as Midwest (2003-2008) and Common Practice, London have greatly informed our approach for FOOTFALL (see Appendix 2). Previous attempts to examine the day-to-day running of artist led organisations have yielded important quantitive and qualitative data for the sector, while highlighting the need to find ways of measuring 'value' beyond econometrics (Thelwall, 2011; Löfgren, 2014). The emphasis on pragmatic, sustainable networks and practice-based discourse (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012) has also influenced our decision to carry out extensive consultation with the artist led sector for FOOTFALL, across a range of data - gathering methods.

In the context of economic recession, the living and working conditions of artists (see Hibernian Consulting, 2010; Shaw, 2004) and artistic labour (see Abbing 2002; Engqvist et al., 2012; Kuster & Tsianos, 2011; Vidokle, 2010) have come into focus in recent years, constituting pertinent issues for FOOTFALL, given the reliance on voluntary labour within the artist led sector. The payment of visual artists has been highlighted by activist groups such as Working Artist and the Greater Economy (WAGE) in the U.S, and Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens (CARFAC) in Canada, who have successfully ratified agreements outlining the working conditions and fees for artists exhibiting in certain galleries. Following a programme of consultation and research into the payment of artists exhibiting in the Irish context, Visual Artists Ireland published 'Payment Guidelines for Professional Visual Artists' in 2013 (see Appendix 2 for details). The need for more extensive, evidence-based research on the visual arts in Ireland has been widely acknowledged by the National Campaign for the Arts (NCFA), advocating a range of strategies for implementing sector-relevant research (see Appendix 2 for details). FOOTFALL aims to situate itself within this expanding field of arts research in the Irish context, with an emphasis on timely, practice-led activity rather than scholarly or academic discourse. FOOTFALL aligns with emerging international research and aims to contribute to the current critical debate surrounding the value of artist led organisations within local, national and global visual arts ecologies.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH OVERVIEW

2.1: Parameters

Artist Led Organisations

For the purposes of the FOOTFALL research, we have defined 'artist led organisations' as: organisations which are directed and run by visual artists, in keeping with the professional and associate membership criteria outlined by Visual Artists Ireland[1]. Furthermore, such organisations might be staffed on a voluntary or paid basis and could be any size, although it was envisaged that the majority of participating initiatives would be categorised as small to medium, non-profit organisations. Organisations currently operating, or closed within the last five years, were invited to take part in the research.

It was felt that the scope of the research would be more manageable if focusing on peer organisations that operate in similar ways to 126. It was therefore stipulated that to take part in the research, organisations must have an exhibition space or project display space and deliver an annual programme of contemporary visual art exhibitions and projects. We acknowledge that there are other models of viable arts organisations that are not artist-led, and equally, that there are other forms of artist-led initiatives (such as festivals, cooperatives, publications and collectives) that are not represented at this stage of FOOTFALL.

Geography

While the impetus for FOOTFALL emerged out of a desire to articulate the value of artist led organisations in an Irish context, it was acknowledged early on that valuable contributions could also be made by organisations situated in the Northern Ireland. It was therefore decided that the survey strand of the research would engage with organisations and audiences from both the republic and the north. Our aspiration was that both the Audience Survey and the Organisation Survey would reflect participation from all four provinces, and as many counties as possible nationwide. We hoped that a geographical spread would represent both rural and urban contexts.

[1] As outlined by Visual Artists Ireland, to qualify as a Professional member you must meet a minimum of three of the below criteria. You do NOT need to fulfil these criteria if you are applying for Associate membership.

- Degree or Diploma from a recognised third level college
- One-person show (including time based events) in a recognised gallery or exhibition space
- Participation in an exhibition / visual art event which was selected by a jury in which professional artists or recognised curators participated
- Work has been purchased by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Work has been commissioned by Government, local authority, museum or corporate client
- Have been awarded a bursary, residency, materials grant or otherwise grant aided by the Arts Council / Arts Council of Northern Ireland or other funding body
- Have been awarded tax - exempt status by the Revenue Commissioners, or are on schedule D as a self-employed artist in Northern Ireland

Ethics

Following NUI Maynooth's 'Ethical Research Guidelines' (2013), the FOOTFALL research committee has endeavoured to adhere to professional and ethical practice across all stages of the research programme. In keeping with NUIM's 'Ethics Policy for Social Research', we implemented measures to ensure that participants understood the scope, aims, and potential audiences of the research, and the degree of anonymity and confidentiality offered at all stages, from data gathering to dissemination (NUIM, 2013: 9). Appropriate measures have been taken to store the research data in a secure manner, in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (SAI, 2013: 7). We have taken care not to misrepresent or misquote any individual who participated, and have avoided using designations which could give rise to unreasonable generalisations (NUIM, 2013: 11). We have adhered to the general principles of social responsibility and have been mindful of any potential conflicts of interest (SAI, 2012: 1).

2.2: Methodological Overview

In keeping with the themes emerging from the literature review, the FOOTFALL methodology comprised a diverse range of data gathering methods, which comprised: direct consultation with the organisations, practitioners, audiences, relating to professionals working in the artist led sector in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A network of potential organisations was devised and representatives were approached about potential participation in the research. **Video Call Interviews** were arranged during the early stages of FOOTFALL and conducted via Skype between July and August 2014. This provided valuable preliminary input from the artist led sector, which informed the programme of research. **Organisation Surveys** were devised as an opportunity to gain detailed insights into the facilities, programming, audiences, organisational structures, financial realities and perceived sustainability of peer organisations. **Audience Surveys** were devised and an open call for participation was advertised nationally via Visual Artists Ireland e-bulletins in October 2014. **Ex-Board Member Surveys** were conducted with former Directors of 126 Artist-Run Gallery, Galway (2005– 2014), providing a more localised perspective. A **Plenary Session** was devised and facilitated by Ailbhe Murphy and Ciaran Smyth of Vagabond Reviews as part of the FOOTFALL symposium (see Vagabond Reviews, Appendix 1.d), which provided a platform for discussion on key issues pertaining to the artist led sector.

Method	No. of Respondents
Video-Call Interviews	6
Organisation Survey	11
Audience Survey	222
Ex-Member Survey	43
Plenary Session	92
Total	**375**

(Fig. 1) Data Gathering Methods and Participant Numbers

2.2.1: Video Call Interviews

With input from the Research Steering Committee; who consulted Visual Artists Ireland's directory of 43 artist led organisations in Ireland (unpublished), a preliminary list of appropriate organisations that met FOOTFALL's research criteria (see Section 2.1) was compiled. These organisations were subsequently contacted and invited to participate in the project. Each of the 11 organisations who participated was asked to nominate a representative to be our point of contact. Five of these were invited to take part in Video Call Interviews via Skype, along with the Valerie Connor, Chairperson for the National Campaign for the Arts (NCFA). Given the geographical spread of the participants, this online platform was identified as the best approach, because it minimised the costs and time commitments. In advance of these conversations, we supplied each of the representatives with copies of the Organisation Survey, which they completed over a four week period. The overall aim of the interviews was to collect qualitative data on five pre-determined questions relating to the perceived value of artist led organisations **(Fig.2)**. However, the conversations also provided an opportunity to discuss the current challenges faced by the participating organisations, to outline the FOOTFALL methodology and aims, and to address any queries in relation to the Organisation Survey. These semi-structured conversations were recorded and transcribed by the assistant researcher. Anonymous excerpts were made available at the FOOTFALL Symposium in November 2014.

No.	Interview Questions
1	What separates the activities of small artist led organisations from other art institutions?
2	Who benefits most from the activity of artist led organisations?
3	Is the value of voluntarily run arts organisations widely recognised?
4	Who do we need to communicate the value of artist led organisations to? (e.g. Government Departments, The Arts Council, City & County Councils, funding bodies, policy makers, local communities, larger art institutions, potential patrons etc..)
5	Do you think it would be possible and/or beneficial for a network of small arts organisations to work together long-term, to communicate their value and advocate for the sustainability of the artist led sector?

(Fig. 2) Questions for Semi-structured Video Call Interviews

2.2.2: Organisation Survey

As outlined in **Section 2.2.1**, 11 organisations nationwide articulated an interest in contributing to FOOTFALL. The appointed representatives within each organisation were contacted by the research coordinator, and editable PDF survey documents were distributed via email. This yielded 11 responses across the four provinces of Ireland. The survey comprised a detailed range of questions which were organised across 3 thematic sections, generating both qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to the organisational structures and activities of these organisations.

Organisation Survey – Themed Sections

While the impetus for FOOTFALL emerged out of a desire to articulate the value of artist led organisations in an Irish context, it was acknowledged early on that valuable contributions could also be made by organisations situated in the Northern Ireland. It was therefore decided that the survey strand of the research would engage with organisations and audiences from both the republic and the north. Our aspiration was that both the Audience Survey and the Organisation Survey would reflect participation from all four provinces, and as many counties as possible nationwide. We hoped that a geographical spread would represent both rural and urban contexts.

1. The Volunteer
This section focused on the roles of individuals within organisations, their qualifications, income from other sources, time commitments and allocated workload, as well as the self-perceived influence that working in an artist led organisation might have on their future career.

2. The Organisation
Section 2 examined organisational structures, such as staffing (voluntary and paid), staff gender balance, annual income and expenditure, as well as a qualitative information on funding sources and funding patterns in recent years, and their insights into how the work of their organisation is valued.

3. The Work
The final section gleaned details on exhibition programming, audiences and whether exhibiting artist are paid a fee. The number of hours worked by board members was recorded over a four week period.

Participating Organisations*

*Presented in alphabetical order, this list of 11 participating organisations bears no correlation with the anonymous ordering system employed in **Section 3.2** 'Funding Incomes'.

No.	Location	Representative
126 Artist-Run Gallery	Galway	Joan Sugrue
Basic Space	Dublin	Dan Tuomey
BLOCK T	Dublin	Grace McEvoy
Catalyst Arts	Belfast	Mitch Conlon & Jane Butler
FLOOD	Dublin	Paul McAree
Occupy Space	Limerick	Orliath Treacy
Pallas Projects & Studios	Dublin	Mark Cullen
PS²	Belfast	Peter Mutschler
SOMA Contemporary (closed)	Waterford	Paul Hallahan
Talbot Gallery & Studios	Dublin	Audrey Hogan
Tactic	Cork	Gerald Heffernan

(Fig. 3) **Record of Participating Organisations, Location and Designated Representative**

2.2.3: Audience Survey

In order to consult directly with the audiences and public who attend artist led spaces, an Audience Survey was devised and data collected via the online resource Survey Monkey. 13 questions were formulated to ascertain the levels of audience engagement and the participants' general perceptions of the value and role of artist led organisations. To coincide with a call for participation (which was advertised nationally advertised via Visual Artists Ireland e-bulletin in October 2014), survey weblinks were disseminated via 126 Artist-Run Gallery website, social media and via email, with assistance from the Research Steering Committee and the participating organisations.

Opening night of *Restless: 7th Annual 126 Members Show,* (July, 2014), 126 Artist-Run Gallery, Galway. Curated by Paul McAree.

2.2.4: 126 Ex-Board Member Survey

126 Gallery is run voluntarily by a board of professional artists, with the stipulation that each artist may serve on the Board of Directors for a maximum of two years. Since the gallery was established in 2005, 45 people have been involved in running the space. It was acknowledged that these former directors constitute an ideal sample group or case study for examining the impact of artist led organisations on the future careers of those who run them. Detailed surveys were devised with the aim of ascertaining the highest level of education achieved and the current occupation of the ex-members, as well as their experiences when serving as a board member. These included: their former roles, the highlights and obstacles of the position and recommendations for future policy and governance. They were asked whether the experience of running an artist led organisation had influenced their future career path or art practice, with regard to transferrable skills or contacts made. While their insights may be specific to 126 Artist-run Gallery's operational form and function and its Galway context, it is envisaged that the wider artist led sector can benefit from the broad implications of contributions made by this group to the FOOTFALL research.

2.2.5: Plenary Session

In keeping with a methodology which acknowledges action research as an 'important tool for generating collaborative inquiry and consulting with professionals from the sector' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; AAR, 2014), it was decided that a discursive session should be facilitated as a platform for open conversation and co-learning. The FOOTFALL symposium, coordinated by 126 Artist-Run Gallery and Galway City Curator-in-Residence Megs Morley, took place on the 21st of November in the Harbour Hotel, Galway as part of TULCA Festival of the Visual Arts 2014 (see Strain, 2014). In the morning session, presentations were delivered by invited contributors Jason E. Bowman (Midwest UK; University of Gothenburg, Sweden), Valerie Connor (NCFA chairperson; independent curator) and Mikael Löfgren (writer & activist, Unga Klara theatre Stockholm) (see Appendix 1 – Contributors' Abstracts and Biographies; 126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.d-f).

In the afternoon, a discursive 'Plenary Session' was devised and facilitated by Ailbhe Murphy and Ciaran Smyth of Vagabond Reviews, with participants seated at 5 large round tables. Key issues pertaining to the artist led sector were discussed across 3 thematic strands (see Vagabond Reviews, Appendix 1.d; 126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.a-c):

1. Alternative Values
Building on the FOOTFALL research programme, this thematic explored collective values. Key questions included: Can we construct new language to communicate what is different about smaller, artist-led arts and cultural initiatives? How should artist-led organisation articulate their identity? What are the features that distinguish us from other organisational forms? What conceptual tools can we use to advocate for recognition and resources?

2. Sustainability
This second theme addressed questions of precarious labour and sustainability. It asked: how is it possible to nurture and sustain an ongoing collective presence in the face of scarce and capricious funding streams?

3. Organisational Forms
This thematic was future orientated, considering strategies for moving forward. It explored and critically analysed key ideas about self - organisation, inquiring as to possible organisational forms: a coalition, a union, a network, other?

Plenary Session: Participants and Documentation

The free event was fully booked, with 70 attendees, 5 invited contributors and 17 coordinating volunteers. Places for the seminar were reserved in advance via the online ticketing service Eventbrite, and there was a waiting

list for cancellations. Artists, curators, writers and students were among the audience, as well as academic staff from GMIT, NUI Galway, Burren College and NCAD. It was noted that although they had been invited, there were no local political representatives, City or County Arts Officers, Councillors or policy-makers in attendance.

The event was well-attended by representatives of artist led organisations (including several who had already completed the Organisation Survey), however unlike the Organisation Survey, there were no stipulations regarding the types of organisations who could participate in the Plenary Session.

Organisations in attendance at the FOOTFALL symposium included:
- Adapt, Galway
- Artlink, Donegal
- Artspace Studios, Galway
- Broadstone Studios, Dublin
- Catalyst Arts, Belfast
- Cork Artists Collective, Cork
- Engage Art Studios, Galway
- Expanded Draught, Galway
- ITSA Collective, Galway
- Kitchen Table Collective, Galway
- Lorg Printmakers, Galway
- The Guesthouse, Cork
- Occupy Space, Limerick
- Ormston House, Limerick
- Pallas Projects, Dublin
- Talbot Gallery & Studios, Dublin

The table-based discussions were documented by both a note-taker and a moderator, who had been assigned to each of the 6 tables. At the end of every thematic, each moderator provided summarised feedback to the collective audience, which was documented via film, as was the entire event. Selected edited clips were subsequently published online, for archival purposes and for the benefit of those who could not attend the event. Data was gathered via:
- Video Footage of the invited contributors' presentations
- Note-takers' notes from the group discussions (6 tables)
- Moderators' notes from the group discussions (6 tables)
- Video Footage of the moderators' feedback

Following the FOOTFALL seminar, the research coordinator and the writer embarked on the process of collating, coding and analysing the various strands of data. Based on the material provided by the note-takers and moderators as well as the presentations of the invited speakers, seven core themes were identified which provided a framework for a detailed Seminar Report (Laws, 2015). For the purposes of both the Seminar Report and the

Research Report, it was decided that audience input would be relayed anonymously through the use of quotations as captured by the note-takers and moderators. Only the invited seminar contributors were individually named, in relation to citations of presentation material.

Opening night, *Towards a New Paradigm*, (June 13th, 2014), 126 Artist-Run Gallery, Galway. Exhibition exchange with the Good Children Gallery, New Orleans, curated by Malcolm McClay & Chicory Miles. Featuring the work of Lala Rascic, Dan Tague, Generic Art Solutions, Malcolm McClay, Christopher Saucedo, Chicory Miles, Center for Tactical Magic and Jeff Becker.

2.2: Perceived Limitations

Sectoral Bias

We have endeavoured to lead this project with objectivity and integrity. However, given that the FOOTFALL research was initiated by an artist led organisation, it should be conceded that the committee holds vested interests in the outcomes of the research, and as such could be perceived as having personal bias. Should a similar programme of research be carried out by independent researchers or analysts from another sector, arguably some of the findings may be different. Nonetheless, the data collection for FOOTFALL was predicated on our unique access to important networks, as well as a rich understanding of the artist led sector. This has not only enhanced the authenticity of the findings presented but also facilitated their collation.

Research Participants

While we were satisfied with the numbers of organisations participating in the Organisation Survey, we were aware that some of the invited organisations chose not to contribute. Many cited time constraints as a barrier, given that the Organisation Survey required fairly detailed information and contained a durational section, to be completed over a specified time-frame. Other organisations voiced concerns over confidentiality, or were unwilling to make public certain aspects of their organisations.

Existing Research

In our rationale for initiating the FOOTFALL research, we acknowledged a distinct lack of existing research on the conditions and activities of artist led organisations in Ireland. As outlined in the **Section 1.3**, the review of existing literature revealed some pertinent research on the visual arts in the Irish context (such as audience figures, the living and working conditions of artists and the economic impact of the arts), yet ultimately we relied on international research for recent data focusing intently on the artist led sector. On the issue of 'articulating value', it has become increasingly apparent that very few reliable indices exist for measuring the non - economic contributions of the arts to society. Furthermore, 'non - economic value' persists as a highly topical line of inquiry and debate in emerging critical discourse across the wider fields of arts and humanities research. Mindful of our limitations in this programme of research, FOOTFALL presents aspects of this ongoing debate periodically alongside the findings, with the aim of identifying key areas that might benefit from future research in the Irish context.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

3.1: Why are Artist Led Organisations established?

Who are we?

At the start of the FOOTFALL Symposium, keynote speaker Jason E. Bowman took a show of hands from the audience, which revealed a large proportion of artists and representatives of artist led organisations were in attendance as well as academics and curators, but no political representatives, City or County Arts Officers, Councillors or policy-makers (see 126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.e). Yet even within this concentrated assemblage, it proved challenging to agree on a common definition of 'we'. With the history of each organisation's formation being engrained in their identity and organisational form, it was difficult to formulate a singular model, given the diversity of localities, activities and the rates of organisational change.

Common Threads (emerging from the Plenary Session)

- We are 'art graduates'[A] or (self identifying as) artists[B]
- We are 'all from artistic backgrounds, creating opportunities for ourselves'
- We have an 'ethos for DIY'
- We have a 'desire for collectivity – peer support and friendship with like-minded individuals'
- We 'choose to be anonymous'[C]
- Our networks are 'interconnected, nebulous and provocative'

Responding to Perceived Gaps

The consensus during the Plenary Session was that artist led organisations are largely established in response to 'some sort of void' or perceived need in the locality, relating to resources, supports, amenities or spaces for art. As noted by Jason E. Bowman during his keynote address 'Valuing the Artist-Led: Do We Still Want to Lead, Run, Centralise & Initiate?' (Bowman, Appendix 1.a), often artist led organisations are: 'set up due to fear of infrastructures around them: It's a system with a history of fear'. This was qualified by many of the organisations present, who relayed their own distinct reasons for establishing, outlining a range of situations, conditions of production and levels of urgency. The lack of exhibition spaces in the locality was cited as one of the main motivations for a large proportion of the organisations. More specifically, there was a perceived lack of non-commercial exhibition spaces which could provide 'platforms or channels for dissemination across local, national and international spectrums'.

[A] As revealed in the survey data, 88.9% of organisation representatives and 100% of 126 ex-board members are educated to B.A (hons.) level. In addition, 33.3% of organisation representatives and 48.8% of 126 ex-board members are educated to M.A level. Of the 126 ex-board members surveyed, 4.6 % currently hold a PhD/Doctorate Degree.

[B] 66.7% of organisation representatives surveyed stated that they are practicing artists.

[C] It is understood that a degree of 'anonymity' characterises the artist led model, given that the identity of organisations is formed through collective and democratic processes rather than individualised agendas. As described by a 126 ex-board member, working in artist led organisations is 'quite an altruistic [selfless] contribution to the development of visual art infrastructure'.

Alternative Values & Peer Support

For the most part, not-for-profit organisations are established by artists in response to 'some collective need or necessity for alternative practice' – something that does not 'sit readily alongside commercial concerns'. Based on a desire for self-constitution, transparency and non-hierarchical formations, these spaces provide the 'opportunity for artists to set the agenda'. One of the main driving forces (raised during the discussion as an underestimated strength) is friendship within the arts community: 'having parties, sharing food, finding common interests with like-minded people'. Many historical examples of artists' collectives were sustained through the dynamic of friendship. Artist led spaces are often initially devised as places to gather, pool resources and maintain the momentum generated through peer-learning in art college. It is therefore unsurprising that the wider FOOTFALL research indicates that one of the strengths of artist led organisations is the provision of supportive platforms for college graduates and emerging artists (see **Fig.10**).

3.2: How are artist led organisations run?

As outlined in **Section 2.2.5**, the Plenary Session was an opportunity for representatives to discuss how and why their spaces were originally established, and how these motivations continue to influence the identity and day-to-day running of their organisations. Although there is immense diversity in the different models discussed, the running of organisations is governed by the following factors:

- Perceived (ongoing) need in the locality
- Alternative practices (curatorial /artistic / institutional)
- Organisational forms (how we organise)
- Fluctuating resources, amenities and staff
- Available support for overheads and programming

Directors

As identified in the Organisation Survey, the Board of Directors is a defining feature of many artist led organisations. For example, the organisational form utilised by both **126 Artist-Run Gallery**, Galway and **Catalyst Arts**, Belfast is based loosely on the 'rotating board' model devised by **Transmission Gallery**, Glasgow in the early '80's:

Transmission is managed by a voluntary committee. Each member of the committee serves for up to two years and is then replaced. Transmission evolves under the influence of each successive committee member and continues to draw in a young peer group as active participants. The regular changes in the gallery's committee maintain a fluid and varied relationship with developing concerns in the world of the visual arts. Key to the support and running of the gallery is its membership body.
(Transmission Gallery, n.d.).

During the Plenary Session, 126 representatives reaffirmed that this model of a two year board means 'constant turn over' which necessitates routinely asking the question 'what do we become now?' With transformation and evolution as founding principles, it was suggested that 'ownership is a barrier to sustainability', and that funding the gallery is in fact an 'investment in the model'.

Of the organisations surveyed, 18.1% indicated that their board was 'mostly male', 36.3% 'mostly female', and 45.6% cited an equal representation of gender within their boards. In response to the question: **'how often do you hold meetings?'** 40% of organisations indicated that they meet on a weekly basis, with 20 % meeting fortnightly; 30% meeting once a month and 10% meet bi-monthly, with all meetings having an average duration of approximately 90 minutes.

When asked to indicate **'how well is your board working together?'** 10% indicated that their boards are working 'fair to well' together. A further 10% believe their board is working 'well', 60% 'well to excellent' and a final 20% believe their board is working excellently together. With regard to the incomes of board members, more than half of the organisations indicated that their board members are 'employed part-time elsewhere'.

Membership

54.5% of the organisations surveyed offer a membership base. While the number of members varied significantly across each organisation, the average was approximately 120 members, with 84% of this membership being artists. The organisations cited a range of entitlements offered to members as part of their membership status. These benefits include:

• Opportunity to attend and vote in AGM's and have input into the programme and / or operations
• Access to spaces including studios, workshops, resource room, rehearsal venues meeting rooms
• Use of facilities and equipment including 'hot-desks', wifi, libraries & archives
• Access to services (printing, scanning, postal address and messaging services)
• Opportunity to join creative networks, promotional platforms and online databases
• Support and advice from organisation staff
• Discounted rates on merchandise, events, workshops, talks, consultancy and mentorship schemes
• Opportunities to exhibit in annual members' shows
• Opportunities to apply for directorship and off-site residencies

Audiences

The Audience Survey generated 222 responses, from 18 counties across Ireland and Northern Ireland[2]. Respondents comprised 167 female (75.6%) and 55 male (24.8 %), with the vast majority aged between 25 and 54 (see **Fig.4, next page**).

152 respondents (68.5 %) answered 'yes' to the question 'Are you an artist? This gender ratio is distinctive, but not unexpected, given Hibernian Consulting's findings in 2010. These suggested that the visual arts sector has the largest gender gap of all of the professional arts sectors in Ireland, and that 'more than three out of five visual artists working in Ireland are women' (Hibernian Consulting, 2010: 6).

[2]The Audience Survey was completed by respondents 'currently living' in the following 18 counties: **Antrim, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Down, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Limerick, Louth, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Westmeath and Wicklow.**

Age	%
Under 18	0.4%
18 to 24	7.7%
25 to 34	39.2%
35 to 44	28.4%
45 to 54	15.8%
55 to 64	7.2%
65 to 74	1.3%
75 or older	0%
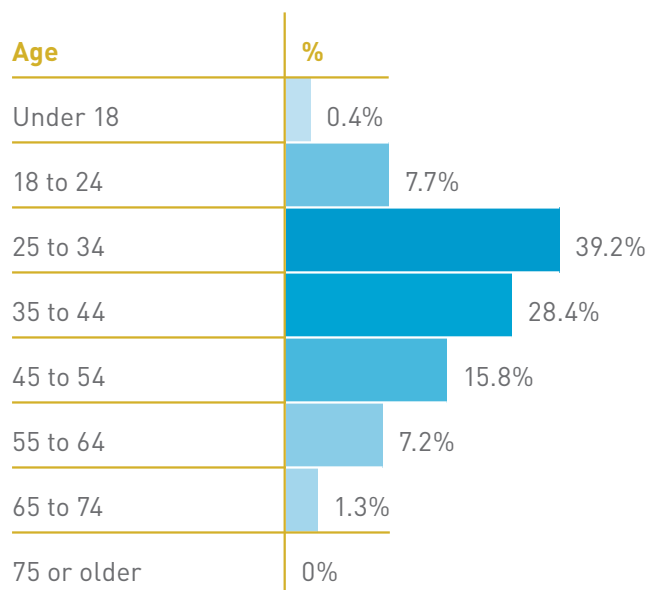
(Fig. 4) Audience Survey: Age Range of Respondents

With regard to audiences attending artist led organisations, 38.8% of those surveyed indicated that they are aware of '6 or more' artist led organisations in their area. As indicated in **Fig. 5**, 30.8% of respondents stated that they visit these organisations between 20 and 30 times per year.

How frequently do you attend exhibitions or events in artist led organisations?	% of 222 people surveyed
Never	4.1%
1-5 times per year	19.5%
5-10 times per year	21.3%
10-20 times per year	24.4%
5-10 times per year	30.8%
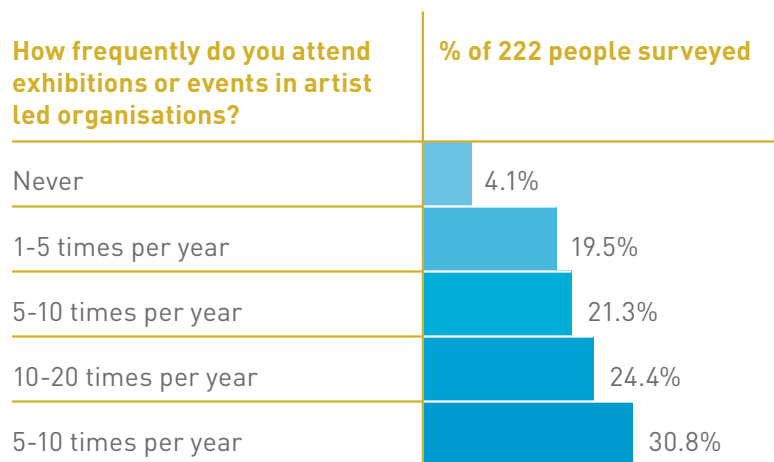
(Fig. 5) Audience Survey: Frequency of Attending Artist Led Organisations

When asked about their audience figures, most of the organisations stated that they track not only attendance figures at their events, but the people who respond to their email invitations. For example, 81.8 % of Organisations indicated that they invite local City and County Councillors to their events, with 63.6% confirming that these individuals do regularly attend their events. As a brief indication of audience figures, organisations were asked to provide figures for their busiest months of 2013 and 2014, outlined in (**Fig.6, next page**).

Busiest Month	Audience Figures for busiest month (2013)	Audience Figures for busiest month (2014)
Every month	—	—
September	300	—
Every month	—	—
July	1982	2230
September	600	800
May	100	180
September	480	420
June	120	145
January	—	286
May	—	—
May	400	420

(Fig. 6) Organisation Survey: Audience Figures – Busiest Month

Staffing & Pay

When asked '**Do you think people involved in artist led organisations should be paid for their work?**' 66.7% of respondents to the Audience Survey stated that they believe 'everyone involved should be paid for their time and contribution'. Taken in descending order of the figures cited below, 43.9% of those surveyed believed that technicians should be paid, followed by curators, exhibiting artists, administrators, all gallery personnel, and finally the invigilators. 5.6% of respondents believe that no one should be paid, and that artist led organisations should operate on a voluntary basis (see **Fig.7, next page**).

Who Should be Paid?	% of Respondents
Everyone involved should be paid for their time and contribution	66.7%
Technicians should be paid a fee	43.9%
Curators should be paid a fee	43.5%
Exhibiting artists should be paid a fee	43.1%
Administrators should be paid a fee	43%
All gallery personnel should be paid	38%
Invigilators should be paid a fee	29.2%
No one: They should operate on a voluntary basis	5.6%

**(Fig. 7) Audience Survey: Who Should be Paid for their Work? –
(Respondents could select multiple answers)**

When asked **'Does anyone in your organisation get paid?'** 80% of the organisations who completed the Organisation Survey responded 'No'. Of the 20% who indicated 'Yes', one organisation pays a Managing Director, Programme Director and other staff on a project basis, while other organisations indicated that small fees are paid to administrators, curators, tutors and technicians when funds allow.

60% of the Organisations surveyed indicate that they pay exhibiting artists, with artists' fees ranging from €75 to €600 depending on the nature of projects and the funding allotted to programming that year. Some organisations offer a fee as well as material costs, with one organisation directly citing Arts Council funding as influencing their ability to pay fees to exhibiting artists in any given year.

Volunteers

With regard to how many volunteers run artist led organisations, the lowest number of volunteers recorded in the Organisation Survey was 3, with the highest being 9. One organisation stated that they have approximately 10 part-time internships, while another stated that they have 1 full-time and 3 paid part-time members of staff.

When asked **'Do you think there is value put on the volunteer within artist led organisations?'**, 55.6% of the organisation representatives surveyed indicated 'Yes', while 44.4% indicated 'No'.

Of those who answered **'Yes'**, it was stated that: 'the value is primarily recognised by other volunteers' or 'within the organisations and within the art community' but that 'within government and local authorities this value is not recognised'. One respondent stated that: 'given Ireland's current economic situation, especially that of the arts sector, the volunteer is absolutely crucial to the running of artist-led spaces in Ireland'.

Of those who answered **'No'**, many raised the issue of highly qualified

people working with no pay, no contracts and little value placed on the work they do, with one respondent stating:

'I think people value our work (its outcomes), but I'm not sure if they fully value how odd and intense it is that we do this for free. Entire art scenes exist, which people value and enjoy, thanks to an amount of good will and enthusiasm that I don't think is always appreciated.'
(Organisation Survey, Respondent # 8)

Another respondent cited the 'hidden labour' and a lack of ways to measure this labour as barriers to attributing value:

'How can a value be placed on the volunteer work when there has been no measure of it? All the hours of administration, installation, phone calls, emails and organisational activities that go into running an organisation go unseen. There is no way at present to quantify this.'
(Organisation Survey, Respondent # 2)

Funding Incomes

As indicated in the Organisational Survey, funding for artist led organisations is derived from a variety of sources, is capricious, and has generally diminished over the last few years. Outlined below are the funding details for each organisation who took part in the survey, including the income generated from fundraising and other sources. The past, current and projected income of the organisations is also presented at the end of this section. Amounts are cited in Euro currency. Any British Pound Sterling amounts have been converted into Euro, using the exchange rate operating at the time of writing[3], and rounded to the nearest €50, for continuity.

[3]Currency Conversion rate, February 23rd 2015: 1 British Pound Sterling equals 1.38 Euro

Organisation #1

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	10,750	28,700	—	—	—	—	No
2013	—	8,750	28,000	—	—	—	—	No
2014	—	7,400	27,400	—	—	—	—	—

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
Yes – Cultural evenings with different forms of entertainment, performances etc...

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
No

Organisation #2

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	—	10,000	—	—	—	—	—
2014	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
No

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
No

Organisation #3

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	—	200	15,000	—	—	—	—
2014	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,000 City Council

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
Yes – Performance nights, music events

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes – Donations

Organisation #4

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	—	600	—	—	—	—
2013	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2014	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
No

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes – Studio rental and sales of artwork

Organisation #5

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	92,000	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	6,050	72,000	—	—	—	—	6,800 City Council
2014	—	—	54,800	—	—	—	—	5,300 City Council

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
Yes – Raves, Bicycle races, BBQ's, Art-dinner events, Yoga in the gallery during exhibitions, Traditional Irish music nights

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
No

Organisation #6

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,000 (in-kind)	—
2013	7,000	—	3,000	—	—	—	—	
2014	—	7,000 (in-kind)	2,500	—	—	—	—	6,000 Festival Funding

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
No

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes – Studio Rental

Organisation #7

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	7,000	4,000	—	—	—	—	—
2014	—	800	4,000	—	—	—	—	—

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
No

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes – Membership Fees

Organisation #8

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	5,500	10,000	—	—	—	—	4,700
2013	—	8,600	15,000	—	—	—	—	250 - Culture Night 2,000 - Festival Fund 100 - H.E.I
2014	—	3,500	—	—	—	—	300	500 - Co. Council 1,250 - Festival Fund 600 - Culture Night 100 - H.E.I

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
Yes – Sale of merchandise, Drinks donations at opening launches

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes – Studio Rental, Merchandise, Membership Fees

Organisation #9

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	—	6,000	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	2,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
2014	—	—	26,650	—	—	—	—	—

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
Yes (see below)

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes:
• Studio Rental
• Gallery Hire
• Workshops
• Creative production with commercial clients
• Consultancy services,
• Events (gigs, screenings etc..)
• Sale of Merchandise
• Sale of artworks
• We aim to establish a small shop and charge commission

Organisation #10 (closed 2012)

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	5,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000 Personal Funds
2013	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
2013	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
N.A

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
N.A

Organisation #11

Year	County Council	City Council	Arts Council	Culture Ireland	E.U	Imagine Ireland	Private	Other Sources
2012	—	Free Rent for 100 years	278,000	—	—	—	—	—
2013	—	Free Rent + new building	265,000	—	—	—	—	Community Fund (details withheld)
2014	—	Free Rent	254,000	—	—	—	—	City Council

Does your organisation hold fundraising events?
No

Does your organisation generate any other forms of income?
Yes:
• Studio Rent
• Merchandise
• Office space rental to local community project

Organisations' Past, Current and Projected Incomes

Organisation	2012	2014	2016 (Projected Income)
#1	39,480	34,800	25,500
#2 Skipped	—	—	—
#3	—	21,850 (Including 'in-kind' income	—
#4	—	—	—
#5	91,940	60,150	74,000
#6	10,000	15,500	12,000
#7	58,100	71,300	85,000
#8	23,600	11,100	25,500
#9	—	—	—
#10	Closed in 2012	N.A	N.A
#11	335,000	336,000	345,000

Other Income

Of the organisations who indicated that they generate income from other sources, 100% of respondents cited studio-hire as a consistent revenue stream, 60% cited the sale of merchandise, 20% cited the hire of the gallery space and 20% indicated that they generate income from conducting workshops.

As outlined in the Audience Survey, just under half of the respondents (47.6%) indicated that they perceive the running costs of artist led organisations to be roughly between €10,00 and €30,00 per year. In terms of organisations' expenditure, it was widely evident that any available funding streams generally go towards rent[4], utilities (electricity, bins, heating etc..) building maintenance, insurance, low budget installation costs and 'staying afloat' rather than paying workers, accumulating a contingency fund or investing in future programming (see **Section 3.6** - Temporal Vs Durational).

[4] 44% of the organisations surveyed indicated that they have no annual rent costs, 22% indicated that their rent is less than €5000 per year, while 33% indicated that this annual cost is more than €5000.

Opening Reception of *Resort: A Popular Destination*, Pallas Projects/Studios, Dublin, 6thAugust 2014. *A Popular Destination* (06 – 16 August 2014) was the third project in *Resort* – a series of off-site residencies experimenting with new methods of art making, communal living and friendship in remote environments. *A Popular Destination* featured new work by Roisin Beirne, Clare Breen, David Lunney, Andreas Kindler Von Knobloch, Blaine O'Donnell, Liliane Puthod, Daniel Toumey, John Ryan and Tom Watt following their expedition to Peanmeanach – a remote peninsula in the Scottish Highlands. Image courtesy of Pallas Projects/Studios.

3.3: What work is done by Artist Led Organisations?

During the FOOTFALL seminar, Mikael Löfgren presented 'No Exceptions' (Löfgren, Appendix 1.c), which outlined his research report commissioned by Klister[5], on the conditions and challenges of small and medium-sized contemporary art centres in Sweden. With regard to the FOOTFALL research, Mikael advised that we should begin by: 'describing what you are actually doing in concrete terms: The daily work and what it consists of; what's worth it and what is not. Only then can discourse be formulated on what is of value'.

As outlined in the Organisation Survey, the types of spaces vary significantly. 81.2% maintain a gallery space, with the other organisations understood as having a project display space, in keeping with the criteria outlined in Section 2.1. Nearly two thirds of the organisations have both an office and studio spaces, while 45.4% have workshops and 18.2% have a library.

The type of work done by each organisation is partly reflected in the job titles of the organisation representative who completed the Organisation Survey. These included:

- Founder / Co-founder
- Director / Visual Arts Director / Co-director
- Creative and Administrative Director
- Treasurer
- Curator / Programme Curator
- Board Member / Board Chairman
- Technician
- Events Manager
- Intern

[5]Klister (meaning 'glue') is a nationwide network of small and medium-sized contemporary art institutions in Sweden, founded in 2012. The network aims to highlight contemporary art institutions' function in the community. Klister commissioned the research report 'No Exceptions' in collaboration with Swedish Exhibition Agency (Riksutställningar).

Members of Klister: Alingsås konsthall, Bildmuseet i Umeå, Borås Museum of Modern Art, Botkyrka Konsthall, Gävle Konstcentrum, Göteborgs konsthall, Kalmar konstmuseum, Konsthall C in Hökarängen, Konsthallen Bohusläns museum, Konsthallen i Haninge kulturhus, Kulturens Hus in Luleå, Lunds konsthall, MAN-Museum Anna Nordlander in Skellefteå, Marabouparken konsthall in Sundbyberg, Röda sten konsthall in Göteborg, Signal in Malmö, Skövde kulturhus, Tensta konsthall and Örebro konsthall.

These representatives were asked about the duties they carry out as part of their role, which are relayed in (see **Fig.8**). Technical work, administration, curation and grant-writing feature highly in the duties undertaken by those working in artist led organisations, as indentified in both the Organisation Survey and Ex-Board Member Survey. For respondents currently working in artist led spaces, project research, fundraising and marketing also featuring prominently within their duties.
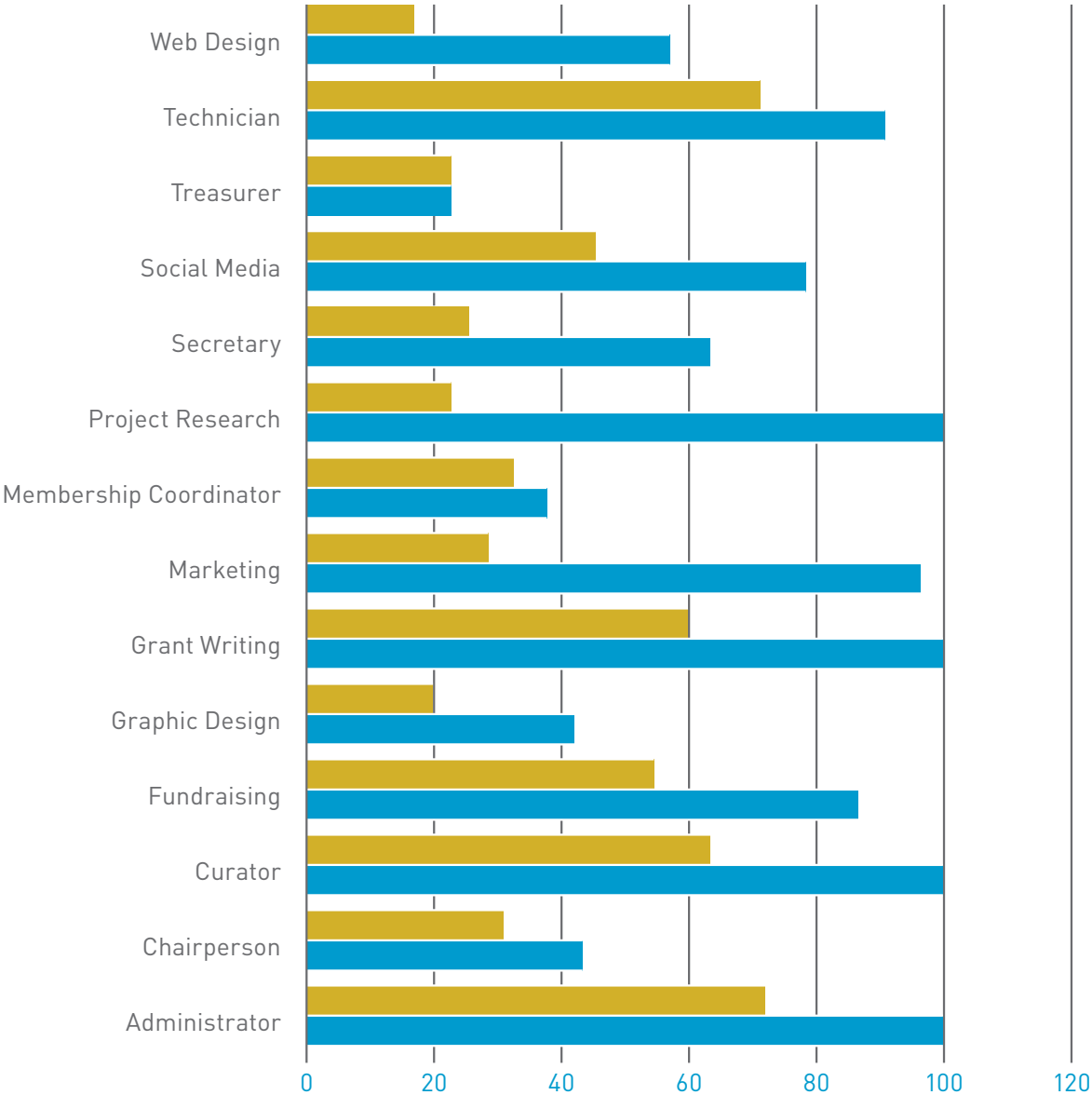
(Fig. 8) Duties Performed in Artist-led Organisations - (Respondents could select multiple answers)

= 126 Ex-Board Members
= Organisation Representatives

Exhibition Programme

In terms of the number of exhibitions developed annually by the organisations surveyed, roughly a quarter deliver one exhibition per calendar month or 12 exhibitions per year. The lowest number of annual exhibitions was 4, while the highest was 20, giving an overall average of approximately 11 exhibitions per year. **Fig.9** outlines the media most commonly shown in these artist led organisations. Installation work is a facet of all of the exhibition programmes, while photography, drawing, performance, experimental and new media also feature prominently. In addition, a heightened awareness of documenting exhibitions and events: 'for the benefit of historical archives and cultural memory' seems to become increasingly important for longer-running organisations. Conversely, the archiving of activities frequently suffers in newly established artist led organisations. This is attributable perhaps to time constraints and a failure to appreciate the 'long-term significance' of their activities, or the necessity to document temporary, transient or ephemeral projects in order to prevent them from being forgotten or lost.
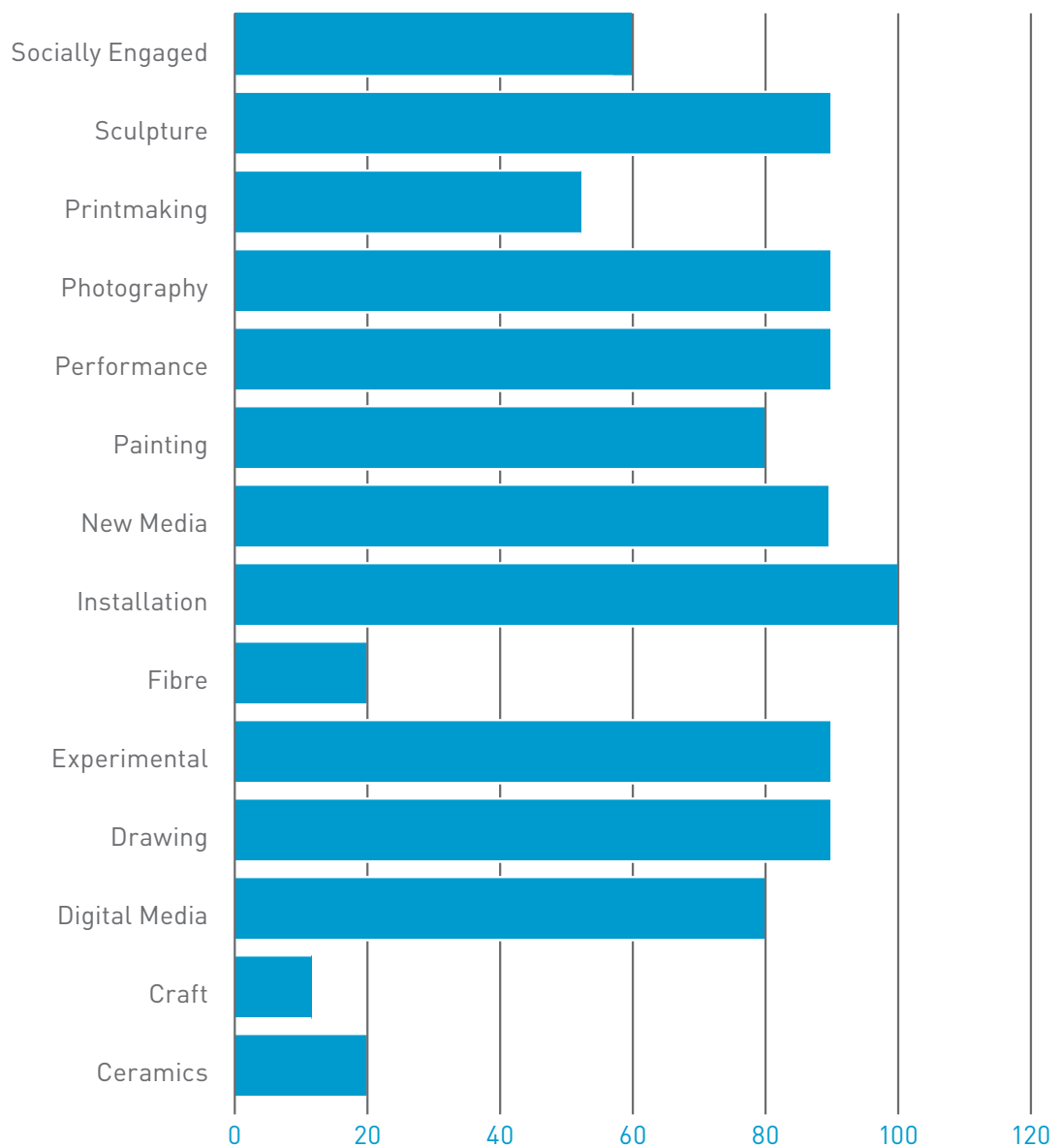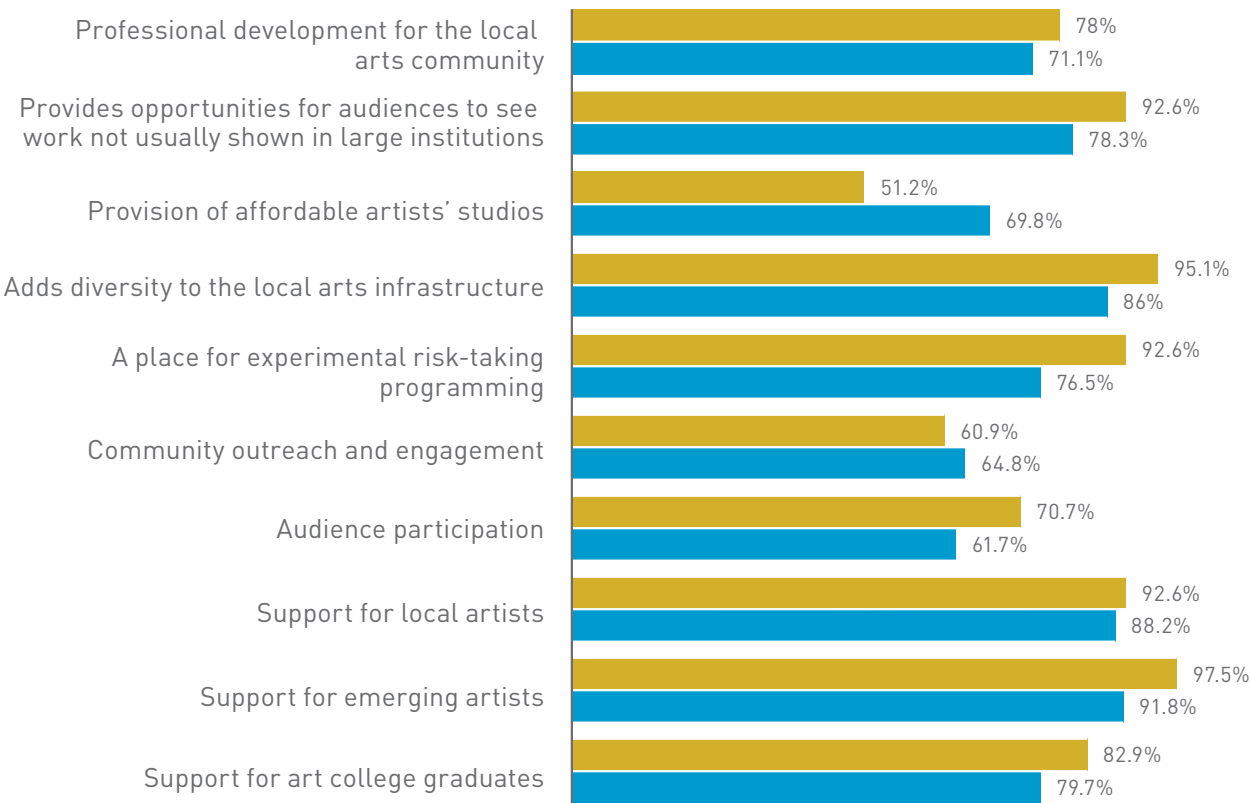

(Fig. 9) Organisation Survey: Exhibition Content / Media of Artist Led   ■ = Exhibition Content (%)

3.4: What are the strengths of Artist Led Organisations?

Main Findings:

- Support for Emerging Artists
- Support for Local Artists
- Diversity
- Experimental Programming
- Agility & Responsiveness
- Connecting the Local
- Practice-led Activity
- Care

Professional development for the local arts community
78%
71.1%

Provides opportunities for audiences to see work not usually shown in large institutions
92.6%
78.3%

Provision of affordable artists' studios
51.2%
69.8%

Adds diversity to the local arts infrastructure
95.1%
86%

A place for experimental risk-taking programming
92.6%
76.5%

Community outreach and engagement
60.9%
64.8%

Audience participation
70.7%
61.7%

Support for local artists
92.6%
88.2%

Support for emerging artists
97.5%
91.8%

Support for art college graduates
82.9%
79.7%

(Fig. 10) **Audience and Ex-Member Survey: What are the Strengths of Artist-Led Organisations? - (Respondents could select multiple answers)**

■ = Ex-Board Members Survey
■ = Audience Survey

FIX 13, Catalyst Arts, Belfast, and various city centre locations, (05 – 15 September 2013). *FIX 13* was the tenth instalment of 'FIX Performance Art Festival' – Europe's longest running performance and live art biennial.

Support for emerging artists[6]

As revealed in the 126 Ex-Board Members Survey, 97.5% of respondents view 'support for emerging artists' as the main strength of artist led organisations. This was supported by the Audience Survey, with 91.8% ranking support for emerging artists as the most significant strength of these organisations. In addition, qualitative answers provided by respondents to the Audience Survey, highlighted a range of ways in which support for emerging artists is manifested. Comments focused on the value of artist led organisations in providing 'a space and a platform to young artists who otherwise would have nowhere to showcase work'. The idea of a supportive 'cultural hub for exchange of ideas for recent graduates' which 'prevents art students from leaving the city upon graduation' featured prominently in the qualitative data. The provision of 'a critical/experimental framework for professional practice' was described as being important for young artists to 'broaden their working network both nationally and internationally'. As one Audience Survey respondent put it, artist led organisations provide:

'[a] starting point for many young graduates to spread their wings in a way most institutional or government-based art agencies cannot'.
(Audience Survey Respondent # 201)

Support for local artists

Another high-ranking perceived strength reflected across the two surveys was 'support for local artists', defined as artists living in close geographical proximity to the organisation. 92.6% of 126 Ex-Board Members and 88.2% of respondents in the Audience Survey indicated that they view 'support for local artists' as a core strength of artist led organisations. This was supported by the following qualitative answers from the Audience Survey, which described artist led organisations as being particularly well-placed to:

• *'Offer local artists a space to work and have their work exhibited'*
• *'Foster skills and resources for artists at a local level'*
• *'Provide critical context and visibility for artists based regionally'*
• *'Provide a collective work environment for artists to practice in'*
• *'Provide access to flexible studio and gallery spaces'*[A]
• *'Devise a local representative body for artists'*
• *'Provide a resource for local artists and arts-minded people to garner 'experience running or assisting a contemporary art centre/gallery'*[B]

Diversity

95.1% of 126 ex-board members indicated that they believe artist led organisations 'adds diversity to the local arts infrastructure', ranking this perceived strength second among their answers. 86% of respondents in the

[6]No definitive definition of the term 'emerging artist' currently exists. Originally devised as an institutional benchmark (by funders, galleries, collectors etc..) to differentiate artists in the early stages of their career from other 'established' or 'mid-career' artists within the industry, the term **'emerging artist'** relinquishes the use of age as a determining factor. The term is widely used, yet is perceived by some as problematic, on the grounds that 'emerging' suggests that an artist is somehow 'unformed', inexperienced or not yet producing important work. While some organisations define emerging artists by age or number of years working as a practicing artist, others use the term to denote the level of recognition an artist has received.

For the purposes of the FOOTFALL research, an emerging artist is defined as someone who:

• has specialised training in the visual arts
• is at an early stage in their career within the industry
• has created a modest body of artistic work
• has some evidence of professional achievement
• does not have a substantial record of accomplishment or exposure (solo exhibition, major publications, substantial funding aside from emerging artist awards)
• is not widely recognised (nationally or internationally) as an established artist (by other artists, curators, critics and arts administrators)

[A]52.1% of 126 ex-board members and 69.8% of respondents in the Audience Survey highlighted 'the provision of affordable artists' studios' as a key strength of artist led organisations

[B]78% of 126 ex-board members and 71.1% of respondents in the Audience Survey indicated that they view 'professional development for the local arts community' as a key strength of artist led organisations

Audience Survey concurred with this view, supported by an array of qualitative responses which focused on the provision of 'alternatives to the state-run or commercial galleries'. Furthermore, this notion of 'alternatives' provided an opportunity to pitch the 'unique vibrancy' of artist led activity in opposition to larger institutions, the global art market and the 'flash-floods of Art Festivals'. It was suggested that artist led organisations can 'grow and nurture an active arts community' while 'capitalising on lower running costs (compared with large art centres)' to showcase 'cutting-edge work not normally shown', and to 'give the public an extra dimension of cultural experience, without the frills...'

One respondent suggested that artist led organisations have a unique 'focus on the relation between production and experience – which has been severed in the institutionalised art world and formalised world of public or municipal galleries'. This dichotomy between small and large was further probed in another response which commented on the capacity of artist led organisations to 'open up a space of potentiality rather than parody of the institution, to resist assimilation by the art market'. This notion of diversity is encapsulated in the following comment from the Audience Survey, on the perceived strengths of artist led organisations:

To support, facilitate and showcase experimental work that pushes the boundaries of what work is being made in Ireland. Other organisations have pressures of making work that meets other agendas; mostly being audience-driven in terms of dissemination and accessibility. The Kitchen in New York is an exemplary artist led space and its' entire ethos is about showcasing visionary work – the rest of the art world follows. This is not to exclude the audience, but artist led organisations should not be consumer (audience) driven. This is the flag that artist led organisations should wave (in my opinion). And then by its' nature, when the rest of the world follows, the benefits ripple, into education, politics, awareness, tourism, but mostly changing perspectives on how people see the world they live in.
(Audience Survey Respondent # 183)

Experimental Programming

The capacity of these organisations to also showcase diverse and experimental content is closely linked to their role in adding diversity within existing arts infrastructures. In this regard, 92.6% of 126 Ex-Board Members and 76.5% of respondents in the Audience Survey indicated that they view artist led organisations as places for 'experimental, risk-taking programming' (see **Fig. 10**). Furthermore, 92.6% of 126 Ex-Board Members and 78.3% of Audience Survey respondents believe that artist led organisations 'provide opportunities for audiences to see work not usually shown in larger institutions'.

In the qualitative answers of the Audience Survey, an emphasis was placed on the capacity of artist led organisations to showcase cutting-edge, contemporary, original and independent programming, while 'bringing exciting shows, symposia and visiting artists to their region' that constantly 'surprise the audience'. Alternatives forms of expression and participation were also referred to in a rage of ways, alongside the capacity of artist led organisations to explore new media, emerging practices, innovative curatorial and presentation strategies as well as new approaches for

engaging with theory and critical discourse. In this way, artist led organisations become 'platforms of exchange', 'incubators' and 'sites of discourse, experimentation and critique'.

Their role, therefore, is multi-faceted in: 'producing art that doesn't have an agenda', 'acting as a type of paradox to increasingly flavourless larger institutions' and in 'encouraging forward-thinking and a different approach to cultural, environmental, economic and political and personal questions that need to be addressed even if there isn't a media spot-light on them at that particular moment'. As one respondent succinctly stated, 'their role, very importantly, is to question'.

Agility & Responsiveness

When articulating the strengths and value of artist led organisations, the language used to relay their activity must be scrutinised. This issue was raised periodically during the Plenary Session, with reference to the 'economic language' that permeates the modern age. Neo-liberal terms such as 'start-ups' and 'entrepreneurship' are commonly used, as is the language of 'flexible labour' which replaces paid work with 'opportunities'. Keynote speaker Jason Bowman asserted that labour in the artist led sector should be described as 'agile' not 'flexible'. During the seminar, the ability of artist led organisations to cope with the constantly shifting conditions of production and dissemination (including staff, buildings, ideologies and audiences) was discussed in detail.

This sentiment was echoed during the Common Practice: Public Assets seminar in February 2015, where terms such as 'nimble', 'swift' and 'reactive' were used extensively (Common Practice, 2015). With regard to the ability of smaller organisations to develop projects on the ground, quicker and more cheaply than larger institutions (whose overheads tend to limit their scope for immediacy), it was stated that the 'provisional' can often be good, particularly in the case of artist led organisations, where there is rarely a motive for 'empire-building'. It was acknowledged in the Audience Survey that artist led organisations tend to be more responsive to their immediate communities or regions, and that they overall: 'seem more socially and politically aware of the needs of the artists involved and the public in general'.

Connecting to the Local

During the Plenary Session, the issue of 'connecting locally' was raised as an important strength of artist led organisations. This point was widely reaffirmed in the Audience Survey, which cited a multitude of ways in which artist led organisations function in connecting local or regional artists and audiences with national or global concerns. As well as being an 'accessible and affordable resource' and a 'viable network for the often isolated practices of individual artists', artist led organisations were described as:

..contributing greatly to the cultural fabric of a region, helping to create and sustain a framework which in turn enables artists to stay, rather than leaving for bigger cultural centres.
(Audience Survey Respondent # 97)

Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the creation of a 'critical and engaged space' was extremely important for practitioners to have the 'conversations needed to develop their work and contextualise it in a larger framework'. This is something artist led organisations facilitate, via their networks, by creating opportunities for local artists to engage nationally and internationally. As outlined during the Plenary Session, issues such as collectivity and the commons form part of ongoing global debates in the arts and humanities, and as suggested during the discussion, 'cannot be viewed within parochial frames of reference'. It is therefore important that the outward-looking perspective and global dynamics of this sector are emphasised, alongside local concerns.

60.9% of Ex-126 Board Members and 61.7% of respondents in the Audience Survey view 'Community Outreach & Participation' as a key strength of artist led organisations. With regard to their local areas, it was widely stated in qualitative answers that artist led organisations 'enhance communities' by contributing to the cultural infrastructure and diversity. They create 'an entry point for audiences to engage with artwork in an everyday way', thus bringing 'interesting and challenging art to a wider audience'. This was further outlined as a reciprocal relationship, in that 'through their own sensibility, artist led organisations respond to artist's and the local community's needs'. In general, artist led organisations were widely recognised as 'breathing life into a region' and 'providing alternatives to the increasing commercialisation of city spaces', with one respondent stating: 'They offer a space for debate, enjoyment, expression and can become central to communities thriving, especially those on the margins'. The 'unquestionably positive' contribution of artist led organisations as 'a voice or platform for disaffected or minority groups' was cited, as was the promotion of the role of artists in society and the 'everyday value in our cultural and artistic heritage'. Furthermore, these organisations encourage new ways of thinking about 'life /community /the world: the more organisations operate [in a region], the more robust this conversation becomes'.

Practice-led Activity

Another important theme emerging from the 'Common Practice: Public Assets' seminar was posited by invited speaker Maria Lind, Director of the Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm. In the context of homogenised funding criteria (which relay value only in economic terms) Maria stressed the 'importance of continuing to talk about art' – something mediator Andrea Philips later acknowledged as possibly 'one of the most militant things we can do' in the face of crippling bureaucracy, forming part of a necessary programme of 'pragmatic resistance'.

This fidelity to artistic practice is undoubtedly an intrinsic motivation of artist led organisations and has been a defining feature of the FOOTFALL research. As stated in the Audience Survey, 'Keeping artists' practice at the core of their activity' is an important publicly perceived strength of artist led organisations, exemplified in the programming of practice-specific agendas. Artist led organisations are essentially about ART, and 'the love of art', which 'provide forums to present art without any other interfering motivations such as political or monetary factors'. Furthermore, 'they help civilise our sick and ailing society by demonstrating that life is

composed of richer experiences than anything that can be bought and paid for'. As stated by one contributor, the role of artist led organisations is to:

Persist and be brave. To be excellent in their belief in the arts they support. To have goals and be inclusive in achieving them. To do the work unfortunately often neglected by well-funded organisations and institutions. In short, their role is to make art happen.

On the subject of what separates the activities of small artist led organisations from other art institutions, Val Connor described what characterises self-organised activity, during her interview with Research Coordinator Shelly McDonnell:

It's also the extraordinary magnanimity of behaving in that (here it comes!) 'entrepreneurial' way because you want to be in charge of your own stuff, your own situation, right? Of course, that's very appealing for loads of reasons. And then what do you do? You start giving this huge return that is predicated more often than not around ideas of the public… I don't know.. about the 'public good' (this is going to become quite a contested term, anyway, I won't distract myself by that!) This idea of returning some kind of quality culture to everybody,..
(Taken from the transcript of a Video-call Interview with Val Connor, Chairperson NCFA)

In a similar vein, Dan Toumey from Basic Space commented on the frustrations often felt within artist led organisations when superfluous tasks detract from the original motivations for self-organising in the first place:

What separates us, and what's become increasingly clear over the last 6 months, is the fact that if it's 'artist led' means that the people running it really have very very little time for bullshit; we find ourselves getting very frustrated when things stop being about the art. Any show we put on or project we take on has to be as exciting as beginning a new work.
(Taken from the transcript of a Video-call Interview with Dan Toumey, Basic Space)

Care

As suggested in Valerie Connor's presentation 'On Our Watch: Artist's Time' (Connor, Appendix 1.b) during the FOOTFALL Seminar, the universal structures of 'care' and affective labour characterising women's activities (Kristeva, 1979) are significant here, not least in their framing of affective labour within the artist led sector. This was highlighted in the Audience Survey, where respondents commented on the 'level of care for artists and audiences' offered by artist led organisations and the fact that they are 'more in tune with artists' needs and ambitions'. During the Plenary Session, it was expressed that what artist led organisations lack in terms of monetary provision, they make up for in the level of care they provide for artists and audiences, exemplified in the following attributes:

- Attentiveness to artists' needs
- Listening and providing feedback
- Trust
- Forging long-standing relationships
- Attention to detail
- Bridging inadequacies or inequalities
- Encouragement and support (both practical and emotional)
- Advocacy
- Championing
- Seeking out development opportunities for artists
- Patience (to let art find the form it needs)

This notion of 'care' was a defining feature of the 'Common Practice: Public Assets' seminar (Common Practice, 2015). Described as 'intangible assets' of artist led organisations (alongside specialist skills, experience, reputation and networks), programmes of care provide 'holistic experiences' for artists which larger institutions fail to achieve because they are more 'audience - focused and competitive with each other'. Conversely, 'care exceeds hierarchy in small organisations', which tend to be more networked and supportive of each other, based on common interests.

   This is exemplified in what artist Céline Condorelli has broadly classified as 'support structures' for cultural practice – variously that which: 'bears, sustains, and props... cares for, assists ... advocates, articulates ... stands behind, frames, and maintains ... those things that give support' (Condorelli, 2009). In this way, artistic collaboration, co-operative activity, expertise and friendship are central to the process of making things public, through approaching issues and audiences in context-sensitive ways.

   Put bluntly, 'care' is the 'non-instrumentalisation of human relationships'. For artist led organisations this means the 'non-instumentalising of artists, artworks or audiences' for institutional gain. However this care is poorly valued, and can be exhausting. Particularly appealing was the notion that artists, theorists and curators are the 'carers of concepts and ideas'.

Installation view, *Turn to Red*, FLOOD, Dublin, curated by Paul McAree, (24 November 2012 – 26 January 2013). The exhibition presented works by artists Stephen Gunning (Ireland), Maryam Jafri (USA/Pakistan), Sean Lynch (Ireland), Jim Ricks (USA/Ireland) and Suzanne Treister (UK).

3.5: What is the value of Artist Led Organisations?

'So in a way I think the value is recognised primarily by the artists we work with – maybe they recognise it most precisely and most strongly. And I feel that regional and national funding bodies recognise it, but maybe not as acutely.'

'Do you think it's only those affiliated with the arts that understand the value?'

'No I don't think it's only them who understand it but I think it might be them that understand it most acutely. I do think it's understood even by the people who live around here – we're in the middle of a residential area, so the people who live around here also understand that we're serious about what we do.'

(Taken from the transcript of a Video-call Interview with Dan Toumey, Basic Space)

Based on the responses provided by both organisation representatives and ex-126 board members, how artist led organisations perceive the own value focuses on the provision of:

Regional & Cultural Hubs:

• Fostering dialogue among the visual arts community

• Provide opportunities for people to learn, share, work and create

• Activate many diverse areas of the city, cleaning and opening up unused spaces creating vibrancy within the city

• Make valuable connections between the local contemporary arts community and national and international networks and discourse

• Bring Irish and international artists at all career levels to one space in a small Irish city.

Amenities & Facilities:

• Affordable studio spaces.

• Workspaces & facilities.

• Gallery space.

• Rehearsal venues.

• Library & archives.

• Offices spaces.

Support for Emerging Artists & Graduates:

• Training, mentorship and vocational opportunities to gain experience and skills in administration and exhibition-making

• Generates a flow of people back into the local arts community with vastly enhanced experience and skill sets.

- Provides a space for artists to develop and open up their practice
  to a wider audience gaining recognition and feedback.
- Accessible exhibition platform.
- Opportunities to connect with a network of other artists in the region.

Alternative Organisational Forms:
- Providing a paradox to larger art institutions.
- Based on democratic and non-hierarchical principles.
- Acting as connection-points for the visual arts community between
  festivals, tourism, other institutions and the public.
- Offering flexible spaces for peer learning and critique.

High Quality, Risk-taking Programming:
- Championing new, experimental and cutting edge ideas.
- Promoting innovative contemporary visual arts programmes
  that are free of charge and accessible to all.
- Showcasing work based on artistic merit and relevance to the
  contemporary visual arts, and not for any commercial concern.

3.5.1: Who benefits?

Who Benefits?	% of Audience Survey Respondents
Everyone	67.1%
Artists in the area	60.8%
The local community	56.3%
Students in the area	51.3%
Tourists visiting the area	47.7%
Children in the area	32.9%
Nobody	1.3%

(Fig. 11) Audience Survey: Who Benefits from Artist Led Organisations? - (Respondents could select multiple answers)

Exhibiting Artists

In addition to the groups identified in **Fig.11**, the research findings widely suggested that **exhibiting artists** benefit most from the activity of artist led organisations. As already outlined in **Section 3.4**, support for emerging artists and graduates, as well as local artists, constitute the core perceived strengths of artist led organisations. Linked to notions of 'care' and 'practice-led activity' (also outlined in **Section 3.4**) it would be fair to suggest that artists exhibiting in artist led spaces gain a lot from the experience, based on the close, long-term working relationships that can be developed with the staff, who are often practicing artists themselves. For most of the organisations surveyed, the artists and artworks constitute the main focus of their work. What the organisation lacks in monetary terms is counter-balanced through staff attentiveness to artistic practice and the provision of support and development opportunities for exhibiting artists. Central to this process is a commitment to providing the space for experiential approaches and risk-taking, constituting a defining feature of the sector.

As articulated by Dan Toumey (Basic Space) during a Video-call Interview with Research Co-ordinator Shelly McDonnell, the benefits artists derive from exhibiting their work in artist led galleries go beyond economic motivations:

*I think the value is recognised most of all by the artists who work with us.
I'm conscious of this because we're still in a position where we can't afford
to pay artist fees and I always feel quite bad about that and make sure that
that's upfront and that they know about that and make it clear what we can
offer [instead. I've found, and I know from being an artist myself, that you do
want to feel that your work is being appreciated and I've found that people
sincerely say "I know that but I still want to be involved in this project.*
**(Taken from the transcript of a Video-call Interview with Dan Toumey,
Basic Space)**

Volunteers

As suggested during the Plenary Session, the experience of volunteering
in artist led organisations can enhance the future career prospects of
emerging artists and art graduates. As outlined in Section 3.2 – 'Volunteers',
this unpaid work is not always acknowledged or valued, particularly outside
of the arts community[7]. Based on insights offered in the 126 Ex-Board
Member Survey, motivations to volunteer in artist led organisations centre
mainly on a desire to:

• Gain experience in the diverse aspects of running an artist led gallery.

• Become an active member of the local arts community.

• Connect with creative networks as a newcomer or someone returning
  to the area.

• Interact with curators, artists, other organisations and the public.

• Work collaboratively as part of a team with other visual artists and
  arts professionals.

• Learn more about the local and national cultural scene.

• Enhance one's own artistic practice.

• Find ways of applying theory to practice upon graduation.

• Assist with programme development.

• Become involved with policy-making and the future direction of the gallery.

• Pursue new possibilities often neglected by the local authorities (amidst
  short-term goals and focus on 'festival culture').

[7]In her 'Volunteer Satisfaction Index'
(1999), Roseanna Galindo-Kuhn
identified four main dimensions to
volunteer job satisfaction.
These were:

• Organisational Support
• Participation Efficacy (i.e. making
  an effective contribution as a team)
• Empowerment
• Group Integration

12.2% of 126 Ex-Board Members surveyed believe that their experience of volunteering on the board of 126 did not influence trajectory of their future careers. 46.3% indicated that it did to some degree, while 41.4% believed that it had a substantial influence on their career path. Regardless of direct impact on their future career, respondents indicated that the experience gained while volunteering benefited their professional and artistic practices in the following ways:

Enhanced skills in:
• Administration, book-keeping, proposal writing and grant applications.
• Public speaking.
• Curation and exhibition-making.
• Programming and planning.
• Technician work, fabrication, installation and art handling.
• Teaching/education practices.

Enhanced Access to:
• Irish visual arts networks.
• Business networks.
• International artists and curators.
• Future exhibition opportunities.

Enhanced understanding of:
• The day-to-day running of an artist led organisations and galleries.
• The social and civic roles of such organisations.
• Contemporary art practice and theory.
• Arts policy in Ireland.
• The realities of sustaining an independent curatorial practice.
• The submission and selection processes for exhibitions.
• Personal strengths and weaknesses.
• Personal career direction (the options available for a career in the arts.)
• The relationships between councils and public funding bodies and artists.
• The relationships between artist-led initiatives and other institutions.
• The level of organisation and professionalism required in the visual arts.
• What is required from a visual artist to be successful.
• The art world.
• The realities of working collaboratively.
• Self-organisation and the artistic community.

Larger Institutions and the wider arts ecology

As already identified, artist led organisations are often established in response to some sort of perceived 'void' in the locality, in terms of existing infrastructures and non-commercial exhibition platforms. Several survey respondents commented on the rigid and narrow programming parameters of larger, state-funded institutions, devised for touristic frameworks amidst

a 'festivalisation of culture', which permit short-lived exchanges and reductive notions of what art can do.

Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt suggested that larger institutions, influential curators, large-scale exhibitions and biennials frequently benefit from the groundwork done by smaller artist led organisations – an investment made visible in terms of championing emerging artists or commissioning new artworks, which may later be exhibited or collected by larger organisations, forming the 'bedrock of their contemporary programmes'. This durational perspective will be described in greater detail in **Section 3.5.2** – 'Deferred Value'. In this way:

The value of small visual arts organisations manifests itself in a long-term contribution to the sector, without which larger-scale organisations could not thrive.
(Gordon-Nesbit, 2012:8)

3.5.2: How can this value be articulated?

The value of culture cannot be expressed only with statistics. Audience numbers give us a poor picture of how culture enriches us.
John Holden, Capturing Cultural Value (2004)

FOOTFALL is quantifying the unquantifiable.
Participant in the FOOTFALL Plenary Session (November 2014)

As articulated in Section 2.2 – 'Perceived Limitations: Existing Research', very few reliable indices exist for measuring the contributions of the visual arts to society, beyond existing econometric scales – measurement practices based on quantitative data such as audience attendance figures, income and expenditure, which are much more appropriate for larger, commerce-orientated models. As a result, the 'measurability' of cultural value persists as a highly topical global debate in wider arts and humanities research.

During the course of the FOOTFALL research, a number of concepts for articulating this value, both within and outside the sector, were proposed. From 'artistic value' and 'societal value' – which form the basis of Arts Council England's strategic framework for the arts (2010-2020), pitched in 'active dialogue with the creative industries' (Thelwall, 2011:24) – to the 'intellectual investment' made by artist led organisations in the localities where they operate (Morely, 2012), there are a number of approaches which could be advocated.

Drawing on the extensive research experience of the invited speakers at the FOOTFALL symposium, several systems of value were proposed during the Plenary Session as being particularly relevant for conveying the value of the work done by artist led organisations. The terms 'criticality', 'deferred value', 'public value' and 'cultural value' were discussed at length, as was their appropriation by various researchers in expressing the non-economic contributions made by the arts to wider society.

The Value of Critique

Emphasising the importance of independent spaces for critical thinking, Vagabond Reviews drew attention to a certain form of 'ideological pragmatism' during the Plenary Session, which suggests that in our current moment of crisis there is no time to think: we must act. In solidarity with Slavoj Žižek and his 'defense of thinking', Vagabond Reviews suggested that spaces for critical reflection have never been more important, especially in light of pressures that threaten to render the academy as a space of non-thinking (Berardi, 2009). As a value, criticality has the capacity to 'challenge the dynamics of power' – a legacy which is 'highly evident in the art historical canon'. In analysing local fields of production, artist led spaces are 'unambiguous about reclaiming a space for critical thinking', and 'sustaining the dynamics of critique'.

Deferred Value

As identified by Mikael Löfgren: 'smaller contemporary galleries are more likely to invest in new artists'. Within the ecosystem of art organisations and artists' career paths, he suggests that artist led organisations are: 'ultimately providing established institutions with new talent, and thus serving as important distributors' (Löfgren, 2014). Sarah Thelwall also addressed this durational vantage-point in her report 'Size Matters' for Common Practice, using the term 'deferred value' to refer to the value accumulated by artworks commissioned by artist led organisations, stating:

...there is very little in the way of a clearly defined feedback loop, enabling these organisations to benefit directly from the value they create as it accrues over the lifetime of the work they commission. The only return on this investment at the time of production is a reputational one and even this is limited. Thus, while being skilled creators of deferred value, small organisations are not realising this value in support of their long-term sustainability.
(Thelwall, 2011: 28)

A critique of the 'deferred value' thesis emerged in the Common Practice: Public Assets seminar in February 2015, when it was suggested that the term reinforces notions of hierarchy which place small artist led organisations on the bottom rung of a competitive ladder. Interestingly, the term resurfaced during a break-out discussion when artistic research (such as might take place during artists' residencies) was described as instigating a form of deferred value in the careers of artists.

Public Value

The term 'Public Value' was devised by Professor Mark Moore in the mid '90's, as a way of describing the value individual organisations and agencies can contribute to society, based on performance aspects which include (1) the delivery of services, (2) achieving social outcomes and (3) maintaining trust and legitimacy within the community. Moore's theory was used to correlate the outcomes of entrepreneurial activity with the experiences and needs of individuals, groups and the society as a whole (Moore, 1995). For Moore, value is generated and exists in context. During the seminar, much discussion focused on the difficulty of measuring the outputs of Artist-led Organisations, with one participant stating: 'It's not profit like on a balance sheet; it's cultural benefit'.

As stated by Mikael Löfgren: 'In order to correctly evaluate contemporary art galleries, an understanding of the interactions that take place between business, contemporary art and society is required' (Löfgren, Appendix 1.c). Similarly, in order to understand and articulate the value of artist led organisations, it is important to understand societal perceptions of the role of artist led spaces, whether as: An outlet for entertainment, pleasure or recreation, an instrument of regeneration for the creative industries, a signifier of cultural diversity or an attraction for cultural tourism.

Measurement

Many of these approaches to articulating value necessitate non-numerical forms of measurement, which can be provided through the use of qualitative research methodologies. Long-associated with applied social research, qualitative methods can convey deep understandings and connections with the subject matter at hand, formulating unique and fresh perspectives, mediated through an authentic language that can only be generated through direct experience and engagement.

Qualitative data-gathering methods include interviews and personal accounts. While the synthesis of such data can be time-consuming, given its' unrefined nature and the necessity for organisation and editing, such material convey complexity, and yields rich, descriptive primary accounts from the field. Qualitative documents can include evaluation reports, participant notes, transcripts of conversations and photographs of settings and situations. For artist led organisations, this might extend to project documentation, reviews and reports – something Gordon Nesbitt described as the 'elaboration of narrative', comprising the wider circulation of project-based narrative and texts to create memorable accounts of artworks, exhibitions and events, while conveying the organisations' reach, engagement and impact (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012:9).

3.6: Temporal V's Durational?

Some days it feels like I gain nothing. I'm just an overworked steward, who does it because it has to be done, and no one else is doing it; Yet some days it feels like the most valuable thing in the world, for reasons I still can't fully explain.
(Organisation Survey Respondent # 4)

Vagabond Reviews' second thematic of the Plenary Session focused on 'sustainability', and probed the 'precarious labour of the artist, uncontracted, permanently plugged into the creative 'flexible' flow of production, without a monetised relation to time' (Berardi, 2009). Further textual provocation was posited with the statement:

What is to be sustained: me? (the accusation of the 'self-aggrandising' artist) – us? (the dream of the collective) – everyone? (the promise of the commons).

'Does precarity have to be a defining feature?'

It was proposed during the discussion that precarity may be 'situational', in that precarity may be needed for artist led spaces to come about. However, it was qualified that artists do not need to be poor, yet often even successful artists still live in relative poverty. With short-term artist led spaces being the 'default stance', it was agreed that a broader conceptual base for thinking about sustainability is urgently required.

Despite common perceptions by landlords and State representatives – that artist led organisations make a profit ('why would you do it otherwise?') – it was widely evident that any available funding streams generally go towards rent, utilities and 'staying afloat' rather than paying workers, accumulating a contingency fund or investing in future programming. The precarious position of artist led organisations often leads to staff burn-out, under the ongoing threat of potential closure.

Notions of precarity being 'necessary' for 'creativity, risk and edginess' were raised on several occasions, signalling debate on whether creativity can be stifled by 'too much funding', presumably referring to the bureaucratic restraints which accompany the funding processes. This position was unilaterally disregarded by the assembled group. The idea that good art comes out of struggle and constant reinvention due to capricious funding is 'highly damaging' for artist led organisations, with one contributor stating:

It is dangerous to aspire to, fetishise or idealise precarity.

Artistic Labour

During the FOOTFALL seminar, invited speaker Valerie Connor presented 'On Our Watch: Artist's Time' (Connor, Appendix 1.b; 126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.d), drawing on Julia Kristeva's seminal work 'Women's Time' (1979) to consider artists as 'non commercial agents' labouring under a 'socio-symbolic contract' (Kristeva, 1979). This framed an in depth discussion on volunteering in the artist led sector. Whether this was mainly a 'youthful activity', and whether voluntary labour can be traced, measured, recognised or valued, was debated at length. Despite the fact that many artists sustain other jobs and a studio practice alongside volunteering, it was suggested that often the artist can benefit from volunteering, in terms of the experience garnered for their future careers. It was nonetheless agreed that without having to work additional jobs, artists could be more productive within artist led organisations, and there would be 'less turnover of staff and less chance of burn-out'.

In one discussion, the volunteer was posited as the 'site' (rather than the organisation or related events), with any 'success' or favourable community perceptions being attributable to the skills, input and effort of the volunteering artists. 'Using oneself as primary resource' was raised during the interviews as an important factor in high level of burn-out and fluctuating levels of enthusiasm within the sector. Seminar keynote speaker Jason E. Bowman's upcoming E.U funded research project 'Stretched', is grounded in the notion of 'artists doing everything' (administration, public relations, curatorial/institutional considerations), while still determining these elements as 'practice'. As stated by Jason during his keynote presentation:

Within these hybridised set of behaviours that take place within artist led cultures – artist as curator, artist as educator, artist as organiser etc – most of these people fundamentally believe themselves to be doing all of those tasks, including the shitty ones, as artists. And yet when we consider what we think artistic practice to be, we quite often are willing to exclude all of that labour within that understanding of what the artist is. It's frequently bounced back out of all the representations, including policy agendas, of what those artists are doing, it's basically amnesia about it. In a sense, artist led is one of the few distinct arenas that those types of things are determined as practice by artists. **(126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.e)**

Hours

In the Organisation Survey, representatives were asked to track the number of hours worked by the team/board over the duration of one month, yielding 9 complete responses:

Week 1

Org	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Total Hours
Org#1	18	18	18	18	18	18	0	108
Org#2	8	8	8	8	8	0	0	40
Org#3	6	12	8	8	20	12	12	78
Org#4	10	27	18	17	17	3	0	92
Org#5	5	5	5	6	8	3	0	32
Org#6	27	22	18	34	18	27	0	146
Org#7	2	10	10	8	10	9	0	49
Org#8	8	1	6	6	6	5	0	25
Org#9	4	4	4	4	4	0	3	23

Week 2

Org	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Total Hours
Org#1	18	18	18	18	18	18	0	108
Org#2	8	8	8	8	8	0	0	40
Org#3	6	10	6	10	10	12	12	66
Org#4	10	27	18	17	17	3	0	92
Org#5	4	5	5	7	8	9	0	38
Org#6	27	27	27	36	16	27	0	160
Org#7	2	10	10	10	10	5	0	47
Org#8	8	1	6	6	6	5	0	25
Org#9	4	4	4	4	4	0	3	23

Week 3

Org	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Total Hours
Org#1	18	18	18	18	18	18	0	108
Org#2	8	8	8	8	8	0	0	40
Org#3	6	10	8	10	12	14	10	68
Org#4	10	24	15	14	14	0	0	77
Org#5	3	3	4	6	8	9	0	33
Org#6	21	24	27	15	27	25	0	139
Org#7	2	10	10	10	10	5	0	47
Org#8	1	1	6	6	6	5	0	25
Org#9	4	4	4	4	4	0	3	23

Week 4

Org	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Total Hours
Org#1	18	18	18	18	18	18	0	108
Org#2	8	8	8	8	8	0	0	40
Org#3	4	6	6	5	6	6	6	39
Org#4	10	24	15	14	14	0	0	77
Org#5	7	8	8	8	9	9	5	54
Org#6	27	32	27	20	18	18	0	142
Org#7	2	10	10	10	10	5	0	47
Org#8	8	1	6	6	6	5	0	25
Org#9	4	4	4	4	4	0	3	23

Week	Total Hours
1	593
2	599
3	560
4	555
Total	**2,307**
2,307 hours @ €8.65 per hour	**€19,995.55**

As outlined, the total number of hours worked by the board/team of **9 artist led organisations** over the duration of **one month** was **2,307** hours. Calculated at the minimum wage rate for an adult worker in Ireland of €8.65 per hour, the remuneration for the number of volunteer hours worked that month would amount to **€19,955.55.**

Taking the lowest example of 23 hours logged in one week by organisation #9, it becomes apparent that if the minimum wage rate is applied in this case, an annual wage of at least **€10,345.40** would be needed to run the organisation.

Barriers to Sustainability

As outlined in the Organisations Survey, there are a number of reoccurring issues within organisations which constitute significant barriers to sustainability. These include:

- **Capricious and diminishing funding opportunities**
- **Overheads:** Rent, insurance, electricity, bins, heating, internet, building maintenance and install costs among others.
- **Inability to pay staff:** 'We would like to enable the people who work here by paying them properly for what they do'.
- **Political interference:** One organisation cited interference from their local Arts Office as being particularly intrusive.
- **Relentless Administration:** Organisations are having to put more resources into pursuing funding options, which detract from the core work of the organisation such as gallery programming.
- **Volunteer Contingency:** The time commitment involved in running artist led organisations can make it difficult to secure long-term commitments from volunteers.
- **Precarious Tenancy Arrangements:** Difficulties securing long-standing tenancy agreements with landlords have been highlighted by organisations. One organisation closed due to building maintenance issues, which were repeatedly raised with the County Council (who own the building). Given that the risk to staff and the public lay with the organisation, they had no choice but to close.

Aspirations of Irish Artist Led Organisations:

As outlined in the Organisations Survey, there are a number of reoccurring issues within organisations which constitute significant barriers to sustainability. These include:

- To keep organisations (and respective accumulated knowledge) going for future generations.
- To give visibility to a legitimate occupation (that of the professional artist or curator.)
- To defend the sector against public funding cuts (which are always felt first by the arts.)
- To maintain, sustain, and protect progress, and to acknowledge the labour that surrounds the production of art.[8]
- To be acknowledged and valued as an active sector and an integral component of the wider cultural 'eco-system' in Ireland.
- To secure funding based on non monetary criteria such as model, reputation, trust, commitment and longevity. This would in turn provide the scope for:

- Workers to dedicate more time to the running of the organisation.
- Directors to focus on the long-term core values of the organisation (e.g. developing and maintaining a space for criticality) rather than the production of short-term projects (i.e. programming to meet criteria of funding.)
- Less compromise and more ambitious, quality programming.
- Developing long-term strategies and future-thinking for organisations.

Recommendations for Best Practice

While the recommendations for best practice suggested by 126 ex-board members relate specifically to the running of 126 Artist-run Gallery and its role within the Galway context, it is envisaged that these comments can be applicable and of benefit to the wider artist led sector. These included:

Operational:
- Developing an annual work plan - clearly documented and subject to quarterly review - acknowledging past achievements and future strategic goals, both short and long-term.
- Maintaining regular contact with the advisory board regarding developmental goals and challenges.
- Establishing a complaints procedure to ensure fair and ethical policy and practice, mediated by an outside advisory member where necessary.
- Securing funding work completed by a paid administrator.
- A diversification of streams to include: paid workshops, studio hire and the sub-letting of facilities where space and tenancy agreements allow.
- Mailing lists should be diverse and updated regularly.
- Junior board member teams could allow 3rd/4th year students to contribute, thus offering the potential for greater involvement upon graduation.

[8]At the Common Practice: Public Assets seminar, Maria Lind recalled Mierle Laderman Ukeles' 'Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969!' which proposed undoing boundaries that separate the maintenance of everyday life from the role of an artist in society

Staffing:

- Clear designation of individual roles. This should be subject to regular review so that no one is over-burdened.
- Contracts should be put in place for each board member, as well as a clear vetting policy and code of conduct.
- Training and developmental opportunities for board members and volunteers would benefit individuals as well as the organisation.

Outreach:

- Develop good working contexts for engagement with local funders, public representatives, potential partners and the wider public.
- Liaise and collaborate with other disciplines.

Programming:

- Sustained emphasis on diverse programming; Talks/screenings/events keeping dialogues open and offering opportunities for public engagement.
- Off-site commissioning.
- Invited international curators would expose members work to an international audience.

Archiving:

The issue of 'institutional amnesia' was raised regarding the loss of knowledge, especially in the case of rotating boards or high levels of staff turn-over. In order to ensure greater retention of accumulated knowledge, which can built upon rather than repeated, a procedures database system was suggested. A staggered intake of new board members is also desirable to ensure continuity, and instituting an annual congress of past board members was also suggested as a method of pooling experience and knowledge.

3.7: Is there a need for further organisational forms?

Establishing a Commons

The third thematic of the Plenary Session critically analysed key ideas about self-organisation and discussed which future organisational forms, if any, could be adopted by a representative body for the artist led sector in Ireland. In her seminar contribution, Megs Morley stated: 'we are not trying to define a territory; we are trying to establish a commons' (126 Artist-Run Gallery, 2014.g). Drawing on Jason's use of the term 'interdependent' rather than independent, it became apparent in the discussion that such potential platforms would need to; 'find a form that recognises that artist-led initiatives have different genealogies' and therefore, 'reflect a plurality of independent models'. (Bowman, Appendix 1.a)

Terminology

It was acknowledged that the sector is the site of convergence of many other distinct but overlapping languages. These include: those of policy-makers, funders, political representatives and the general public, as well as the theoretical and practice-based discourses of art education and contemporary art. As articulated by certain individuals during the discussion, the challenge is not to construct a new language, but to foster a 'new use of language' for the artist led agenda, based on the 'visual language of doing'. In this way, the value of the artist led sector can be articulated, translated and made for non-art sectors.

As well as the terminology initially suggested by Vagabond Reviews (coalition, union, network), other organisational forms were raised during the discussion, such as 'Party', 'Alliance', 'Association' and 'Federation' (a voluntary sector based on lobbying). Nobody liked the term 'Club'. The organisational structures of existing Irish initiatives such as Visual Artists Ireland and the National Campaign for the Arts were discussed. The overall consensus was that before deciding on suitable terminology, the potential membership should be clarified (i.e. the organisations or the people / representatives/workers) as well as the focus and we might want to accomplish.

Possibilities

During the discussion, it was acknowledged that having a larger national collective would offer a platform for peer-support, the sharing of knowledge and resources and the 'power in numbers' to lobby for further resources for the sector. It could also provide the opportunity to move beyond the 'day-to-day' towards 'future-thinking', and to collectively set out clear objectives for the sector, using the network as a means to achieving this. It was acknowledged that this process might be slow initially, as a network

was built, but that it could commence with an online forum, to gauge interest and momentum. It was proposed that further platforms could be established, such as weekend events, a Day of Action or even biennial events, which would offer visibility to this active sector. Other possibilities for the network were explored, such as educational remits, archival functions and as a channel for accessing European funding. On the subject of inter-connectivity, Mikael proposed that this should have an international focus, with several contributors acknowledging that connecting globally to other initiatives could form part of a multi-faceted 'survival strategy'. As suggested by Orlaith Treacy (Occupy Space) during a Video-call Interview with Research co-ordinator Shelly McDonnell in August 2014, a network or advocacy group could function as an platform for sharing information about opportunities, stating that: 'there needs to be more transparency as to what alternative funding bodies are out there'.

Barriers & Stipulations

Perceived barriers to the formulation of a network focused primarily on workload, as this would have to be done by 'an already stretched voluntary sector'. While perceived as an initial 'drain of energy' it was conceded that long-term benefits could be gleaned for all members. However, several contributors actively disliked the idea of devising a further organisational structure, which they viewed as merely adding 'another layer of administration'. Some voiced the opinion that 'a loose network of association is sufficient', stating that many of the organisations already regularly collaborate with others, in organic, informal ways.

The 'conditions for self-constitution' and the 'complexity of representation' were repeatedly raised as prominent concerns. Discussions focused on the difficulties of identifying a clear common agenda, given the diversity of organisations, and the fear this may compromise individual identities. This is something artist led organisations are protective of, because their identity denotes how they define themselves as distinct within the sector. Jason confirmed that, in his experience, a 'generalist notion' would be required, which could be agreed upon, but which can 'collapse on the smallest of details'. Using a 'meritocratic' approach would necessitate the convergence of different skill-sets. Concerns were also raised about the necessity to stay focused on practice, rather than allowing it to become an overly academic exercise, yet in reality practitioners are already 'stretched too thin'.

On the subject of competition within the artist led sector and with other sectors, Jason E. Bowman suggested that we should be asking: 'what can hold us together, rather than what keeps us in a state of fear and in competition with each other?' It was suggested that the artist led sector, built on friendship and trust, is particularly well-placed to resist the 'mythology of competition'. With this in mind, it was stipulated that any future organisational forms should be self-constituting and 'cannot be top-down; it must be at grass roots'.

3.8: Closing Comments

Maintenance:
keep the dust off the pure individual creation;
preserve the new; sustain the change;
protect progress; defend and prolong the advance;
renew the excitement; repeat the flight;

Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969)

MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART
Proposal for an exhibition "CARE"

Understood, in its linear sense, 'footfall' commonly refers to the monitoring of audience attendance figures within a particular timeframe. However, in a more literary way, the term denotes the 'sound of footsteps', suggestive of activity occurring somewhere nearby. During the course of the research, we have listened attentively to gauge the strength, pace and impact of this soundscape, how it resonates, where it can be heard, and by whom. We have reflected on what kind of physical impression, imprint or trail these collective footprints might leave behind.

FOOTFALL represents the start of a conversation, or perhaps more accurately, this research represents one of the first time this conversation has been documented for others to read. The question of the value of artist led organisations in Ireland has previously been debated at length: – behind walls, within studios, amidst gallery installs, during the prolonged exasperation of grant-writing and on the occasion of under-funded galleries closing their doors for the last time...

With FOOTFALL, Ireland now has a tentative demographic of the audiences who attend artist led organisations. Reductive and neat, these figures satisfy the bodies which ascribe merit. But numbers – even those which calculate the hours of unpaid labour invested by professional artists in maintaining these organisations – do not tell the story of value. We now have a richer understanding of the strengths of artist led activity, as articulated by ex-board members, audiences and the organisations themselves. But even these accounts do not relay the full impact of this value. FOOTFALL has probed multiple ways in which the sector might begin to articulate its value, while advocating for qualitative forms of measurement, supported by narrative to convey complexity.   This material is by no means exhaustive, and any of these strands could form the basis of future research.

FOOTFALL has examined the pay and conditions of professional artists working in the artist led sector, the position of volunteers and the question of sustainability. As the global debate on artistic labour gains momentum, a closer inspection of the endemic unpaid labour which characterises the Irish visual arts sector, remains a pressing issue. With its' diverse and agile interdependent networks, programmes of care and faith in emerging forms, Ireland's artist led sector is well placed to channel this critical and imminent conversation, as it continues to unfold.

Process, BLOCK T, Smithfield, Dublin, (2013). *Process* was an exhibition of works by selected recent graduates from NCAD, DIT, IADT AND LIT, curated by Grace McEvoy. Image courtesy of Tadhg Nathan and Block T.
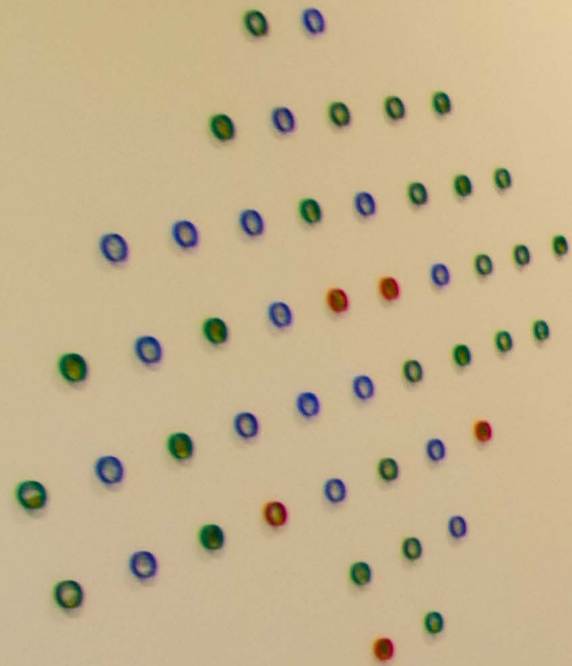
Installation view, *Restless: 7th Annual 126 Members Show*, 126 Artist-Run Gallery, Galway, (14th- 23rd July, 2014). *Restless*, curated by Paul McAree, as part of Galway International Arts Festival 2014, featured the work of Amanda Rice, Aneta Nowicka, Breda Lynch, Emer Ní Chíobháin, Gianna Tasha Tomasso, Kerry Guinan, Inguna Gremzde, Jane Queally, Michael Holly, Noelle Gallagher, Nora Duggan, Robin Jones and Ruby Wallis.

Mark Cullen 'Justified Ancient' (2010) was exhibited in Soma Contemporary, Waterford as part of *Difference Engine: Manifestation V*, (28 October – 03 December 2011). The exhibition toured to various venues in Ireland and the U.S and presented works by Irish artists Mark Cullen, Wendy Judge, Gillian Lawler and Jessica Foley as well as the British-born Chinese artist Gordon Cheung

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APPENDIX 1: CONTRIBUTORS'
ABSTRACTS AND
BIOGRAPHIES

Appendix 1.a

Jason E. Bowman ~ Abstract

Valuing the Artist-Led: Do We Still Want to Lead, Run, Centralise & Initiate?:

In this presentation, Jason E. Bowman will seek to provoke whether, within the current status of 'the artist-led', we are encountering a de-imagining (Giroux) or amnesia of its instigative circumstances as alternative to the mainstream (Ault). He will consider how the dark matter (Sholette) of artistic practices is being disavowed by the neoliberal era and if the Y in D.I.Y. has truly come to a crisis point by being considered as self-serving (Relyea). Through examination of various endeavours to think through alternatives to, re-interpretations of, or disavowals of metricisation and measurement, Jason will seek to question if the originating values of the artistled are able to be recuperated when we sustain rhetorics such as leading, centering, running and initiating as key indicators. He will propose that if we begin to think through how practice is stretched and assembled within artist-led cultures, whether new ways of describing its value by recuperating or re-framing its values may become possible. He doesn't know what the impact of that may yet be and whether it will support survival or become a noose. He wants to discuss that with You.

Biography

Jason E. Bowman is 'an artist with a curatorial practice', who trained at MMU (Manchester Metropolitan University) and the John Logie Baird Centre for Cultural Studies at Glasgow University. He is Programme Leader of the MFA: Fine Art and Research Representative: Fine Art at the Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg. He is a member of the working group for PARSE Journal and Conference (Platform for Artistic Research Sweden). With Suhail Malik and Andrea Philips, he will co-edit an edition of the PARSE journal on 'Value' for 2015. Funded by the Swedish Research council, in 2013, he edited the first illustrated anthology to be published (Art and Theory, Stockholm) on the interdependencies of Trust and Dialogue in the work of Esther Shalev-Gerz. Esther Shalev-Gerz: The Contemporary Art of Trusting Uncertainties and Unfolding Dialogues included commissioned writing by: Stefanie Baumann, Jason E. Bowman, George Didi-Huberman, Lisa Le Feuvre, Andrea Phillips, Jacques Rancière, Jacqueline Rose, Esther Shalev-Gerz, Annika Wik and James E. Young.

He is currently affiliated as researcher to the EU funded NEARCH project examining intersections between contemporary art, communities and archaeology in partnership with 13 organisations in ten countries, including the Jan van Eyck Akademie, Oxford University and Paris X University. He has long advocated for an expanded notion and understanding of artistic practice, which includes the making of art, but is not to be defined solely by the visibility of an artwork as the definitive result of artistic labour. He advocates for a more intimate awareness of the notion of practice in

order to increase knowledge of what artists 'do' and what affects they produce, beyond metricisation. He continues to conduct research on the notion of practice within artist-led cultures, which is influenced by the six-year long initiative Midwest, (2003-2008), funded by Arts Council England, in order to develop an artist-led infrastructure from the West Midlands, UK. Midwest was centred on the artist as a catalyst for change in the conditions of production and dissemination developing tools, resources and skills for artist to lead on the change of situation and circumstance. In October 2014, in his role at Valand Academy, he was awarded €409, 921 to conduct a three-year long research project entitled 'Stretched' into the expanded notions of artistic practice generated within and for artist-led cultures, from the perspective of the artist-curator. This research will begin in 2015.

Appendix 1.b

Valerie Connor ~ Abstract

On Our Watch: Artist's Time

I'll be outlining the emergence of the National Campaign for the Arts; and asking Who Watches the Watchmen? The effects of the economic crises in Ireland are flattening and the ideology of austerity is in the ascendant. The kind of horizontal organisations generally favoured by not for profit artist led initiatives are perceived as weak within sacrificial economies that favour hierarchical power. Under all kinds of pressure such groups, communities, organisations, become home to acts of lateral violence, a situation produced when the powers that be are perceived to be above and beyond influence. Well, hold on: is this written in the stars or has a new alignment of artists being taking place for some time now - we just can't really see it yet? I'm going to take an anti-clockwise look at how time became organised across our art lives and art worlds. To think about how the particular values artists attribute to time and the organisation of their own labour and that of the 'viewer-producer', the participant. Recall artists' role in constructing alternative temporalities - their open revolt against the rationalization and control of time by others, by industry, by claiming time as their own; from the esoteric 'studio time' to the mythical 'process'. I suspect there is red thread here. If we pull, it takes us through a politics of labour and artists' competition for control over the tools of reproduction and representation. Let's look at the increasingly polarisation the terms 'work' and 'job', see if it helps to look to the voluntary and third sector, and examine how political discourse expresses and communicates on the question of the value of artists in and to society. In the end, do artists aspire to more than playing the non-speaking parts in the unfolding drama of our modern sacrificial economy? Watch the Skies.

Biography

Valerie Connor is an independent curator and adviser in the visual arts. Currently she is working on publications and events with Fingal County Council Arts Office, Askeaton Contemporary Arts, Limerick, 126 Artist-Run Gallery, and Para-Institution in partnership with Adapt, Galway. Recent curatorial projects include a set of touring commissions for the National Women's Council of Ireland, the programme for TULCA Festival of Visual Art 2013, and a co-production project with Black Church Print Studio. Previously, she was Visual Arts Adviser to the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, a board member of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Ireland's Commissioner / Curator for the Venice and São Paulo art biennials and Visual Arts Director at Project Arts Centre. She is a contributor to the Royal Irish Academy's Art and Architecture of Ireland, co-published with Yale University Press and lectures in Photography at the Dublin Institute of Technology. She is on the Advisory Panel of the National Irish Visual Arts Library and is the Chair of the National Campaign for the Arts.

Appendix 1.c

Mikael Löfgren ~ Abstract

No Exceptions (Inga undantag)

Mikael will present and discuss No Exceptions (Inga undantag), a new report about the conditions and challenges of small and medium-sized contemporary art centers in Sweden produced by the Klister network of 20 contemporary visual art organisations in Sweden. The organisations are spread all over Sweden, and organised in different ways. Some are run by the local authority, others by a foundation, and yet others are independent. They are all small or middle sized. The No Exceptions report investigates their resources and challenges, their ways of work and functioning. Inspired by the work of Pier Luigi Sacco (system wide cultural districts), Sara Thelwall (deferred value) and Mark Moore (public value), No Exceptions tries to develop a coherent view on, and in the longer run also evaluate, the manifold creation of value that takes place in small contemporary art halls. Löfgren argues that the demand for measurability and immediate numbers that characterizes contemporary cultural discourse is not suitable for evaluating the work of smaller art institutions. Löfgren also argues that what primarily characterizes the work of these art centers is their ability to establish effective networks locally, regionally, nationally and globally, and that networking is not just a geographical phenomenon. The art centers connected to the network of Klister act as links between the public and cultural life, between education and research, and between the personal and the political. Members of Klister: Alingsås konsthall, Bildmuseet i Umeå, Borås Museum of Modern Art, Botkyrka Konsthall, Gävle Konstcentrum, Göteborgs konsthall, Kalmar konstmuseum, Konsthall C in Hökarängen, Konsthallen Bohusläns museum, Konsthallen i Haninge kulturhus, Kulturens Hus in Luleå, Lunds konsthall, MAN-Museum Anna Nordlander in Skellefteå, Marabouparken konsthall in Sundbyberg, Röda sten konsthall in Göteborg, Signal in Malmö, Skövde kulturhus, Tensta konsthall and Örebro konsthall.

Biography

Mikael Löfgren is a writer and activist, cultural critic and lecturer. He has previously worked as editor at the daily Dagens Nyheter, the cultural magazine Ord & Bild, and at Swedish Television. He is the author of Inga undantag (No Exceptions) - a new report produced by Klister, a nationwide network for small and medium-sized contemporary art centers in Sweden. Löfgren has also worked as university teacher in Cultural Studies and as dramaturge at Unga Klara theatre, Stockholm. He has published books on various topics: postmodernism, football, Ship to Gaza, the labour market, the global justice movement, digitisation and copyright. He lives on an island outside Gothenburg.

Appendix 1.d

Vagabond Reviews ~ Plenary Session

In the plenary Vagabond Reviews will facilitate considered discussion on three key themes for smaller arts organisations in their various forms. Moving between table-based discussion and collective feedback, themes considered will include:

Alternative Values: Building on the FOOTFALL research programme, this thematic explores collective values. Can we construct new language to communicate what is different about smaller, artist-led arts and cultural initiatives? The theme invites an exploration of identity. Who are we? What are the features that distinguish us from other organisational forms? What conceptual tools can we use to advocate for recognition and resources?

Sustainability: This second theme addresses questions of precarious labour and sustainability. How is it possible to nurture and sustain an ongoing collective presence in the face of scarce and capricious funding streams?

Organisational Forms: This thematic is future orientated, considering strategies for moving forward. It explores and critically analyses key ideas about self-organisation. What organisational form should be adopted: a coalition, a union, a network, other?

Biography

Co-founded in 2007 by artist Dr. Ailbhe Murphy and independent researcher Dr. Ciaran Smyth, Vagabond Reviews is an interdisciplinary platform combining socially engaged art and research practice. We are interested in the potential of interdisciplinary arts and research practice as a rich context for learning between academic and art spaces and beyond both those institutional contexts in order to engage broader publics in alternative forms of cultural participation and knowledge production. Current projects include Scientia Civitatis: Missing Titles for the exhibition Phoenix Rising, Art and the Civic Imagination at the Hugh Lane Gallery curated by Logan Sisley and the Arcade Project, which explores arts-based pedagogy in youth work with the Rialto Youth Project, Dublin 8. Other projects include (In)Visible Labour Factorium for the National Women's Council of Ireland's Legacy Project, curated by Valerie Connor. The Legacy project exhibition 'Still, We Work' was exhibited at the Gallery of Photography and 126 Gallery, Galway as part of the Tulca Visual Arts Festival in November in 2013 and in Cork City Hall and EU House Dublin in 2014. Also the Sliabh Bán Art House (2011-2012) a participatory public art project commissioned by Galway City Council's Arts Office and developed in collaboration with the Sliabh Bán Resident's Association and City and (Re)Searches Experiences of Being Public (2012-2013) an interdisciplinary arts-based research initiative which engaged with questions of community -based culture. Extending over four cities in Ireland, Lithuania and the Netherlands, City (Re)Searches was produced by Blue Drum, Community Arts Partnership Belfast and the Kaunas Biennial.

APPENDIX 2: IRISH & INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES / RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Midwest (2003-2008)

Midwest (2003-2008) was a five-year long initiative funded by the Arts Council England, aimed at developing an artist-led infrastructure in the West Midlands region of the UK. The project was initiated by three visual arts professionals: Jason E. Bowman[9], Rachel Bradley and Julie Crawshaw, at the invitation of the Arts Council of England. Midwest's methodology comprised the development of a web-based global network, as well as a comprehensive programme of 'on the ground' activity including project development events, research field trips and a graduate showcase exhibition[10]. A prominent aspect of Midwest was a series of talks (known as 'saloons') with invited speakers across a range of locations, which sought to bring artists together to activate discussions on a range of topics including regional, national and international arts infrastructures, alternative curatorial approaches, publishing, research, visibility outside 'non-urban centres' and the sustainability of artist led organisations. Midwest provided an impetus for creative thought and action, focusing on social processes as well as self-directed and collective learning within the visual arts. These methods necessitated the development of a range of practical tools, which would equip artists with the resources and skills necessary to lead this situational change (Midwest, 2008.a).

Common Practice

Founded in 2009, **Common Practice, London**[11] is an advocacy group 'working for the recognition and fostering of small-scale contemporary visual arts in London'. The group aims to:

- Promote the value of this sector and its activities
- Act as a knowledge and resource base for members and affiliated organisations
- Develop a dialogue with other visual art organisations at a local, national and international level.

Drawing inspiration from Common Practice, London, **Common Practice New York**[12] was formed in 2012 to advocate for research and discussion about the role of small-scale arts organizations in New York City. The group aims to examine how 'small-scale New York arts organisations are perceived and evaluated by audiences, artists, and funders'.

Founded in 2013, **Common Practice Los Angeles**[13] draws inspiration from the affiliated organisations Common Practice, London and Common Practice NY outlined above. The group addresses the challenges and advantages of operating as an arts organisation in a Los Angeles context, with conversations focusing on the:

- adaptability of large institutions to exhibiting project-oriented art
- diminished funding for long-term support of artists' practices
- encroaching commercial landscape
- increasing compartmentalization of arts districts
- shifting needs of area art schools

[9]In 2014, Jason E. Bowman – now MFA Fine Art Programme Leader & Research Representative at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg – was recently awarded a substantial Swedish Research Council grant for his upcoming research project 'Stretched', which seeks to examine 'how artistic practice is assembled, expanded and stretched within the cultures of 'the artist-led''.

[10]See related publications:

- Midwest (2007) Know Your Place, Birmingham: Midwest
- Midwest (2008) Overview, Birmingham: Midwest
- Midwest (2008) Up and Away, Birmingham: Midwest
- Midwest (2008) Word of Mouth: Midwest 2003-2008, Birmingham: Midwest

Bradley, Rachael & Jones, Cheryl (2014) 'Artist Led Culture in the West Midland' in Bradley, Rachael (ed.) New Art West Midlands exhibition catalogue, Birmingham: Birmingham Museum Trust, pp. 14 - 17

García, Beatriz (2007) 'Can policy be Artist-led? Perspectives from a researcher and policy analyst', presentation at Midwest seminar 'Know Your Place', 7 March 2007, UCE, Birmingham.

[11]**Common Practice, London – Founding Members:** Afterall, Chisenhale Gallery, Electra, Gasworks, LUX, Matt's Gallery, Mute Publishing, The Showroom, and Studio Voltaire. http://www.commonpractice.org.uk/

[12]**Common Practice, New York – Founding Members:** Artists Space, The Kitchen, Light Industry, Participant Inc, Printed Matter, Triple Canopy, and White Columns. http://commonpracticeny.org/

[13]**Common Practice, Los Angeles – Founding Members:** East of Borneo, Human Resources, LACE, LA><ART, the MAK Center, REDCAT, and X-TRA / Project X. http://commonpracticela.org/

Size Matters: Notes towards a Better Understanding of the Value, Operation and Potential of Small Visual Arts Organisations

Commissioned by Common Practice, London, 'Size Matters' was written by Sarah Thelwall and published in July 2011. The report advocates a revision of assessment and investment practices for small-scale art organisations, while aiming to 'articulate the value of the small-scale visual arts sector within the wider arts ecology'. This call for change emerges from accounts of operational difficulties and substantial financial challenges faced by these organisations. Thelwall utilised the term 'deferred value' as a vehicle to convey the value accumulated over time by artworks originally commissioned by artist led organisations. The term also denotes the durational relationships small-scale organisations have with emerging artists, and the part these organisations play in any future success (Thelwall, 2011).

Value, Measure, Sustainability: Ideas Towards the Future of the Small-Scale Visual Arts Sector

Written by Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt in 2012, this report was produced in response to a one day symposium and discursive event hosted by Common Practice, London. Building on the 'Size Matters' paper outlined above, the report further probes alternative methods for evaluation and measurement in the small-scale contemporary visual arts sector, beyond 'footfall and econometric indices', to encompass cultural value and artistic merit. It also considers how organisations might cope with diminishing funding and examines alternative funding streams and partnership schemes (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2012).

Public Assets: small-scale arts organisations and the production of value[14]

Common Practice presented a one-day conference in February 2015, to further discuss the cultural contributions made by smaller arts organisations to the wider arts ecosystem. The event was organised in collaboration with Andrea Phillips and speakers included: Jesús Carrillo, Kodwo Eshun, Charlotte Higgins, Maria Lind and Lise Soskolne (W.A.G.E.). (Common Practice, 2015). FOOTFALL report writer Joanne Laws attended the conference, with a view to familiarising herself with emerging research and current critical debate on the subject, and to discuss the Irish FOOTFALL project with other researchers and arts professionals.

No Exceptions (Inga Undantag)

Published in 2014, No Exceptions (Inga Undantag) is a report by Mikael Löfgren on the conditions and challenges faced by Swedish small and

[14]'Public Assets: small-scale arts organisations and the production of value' – Common Practice conference, 6th February 2015, Platform Theatre, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, London.

medium-sized contemporary visual art organisations. The report was produced by Klister – a network of 20 organisations – to examine the structural models, ways of working, resources and challenges faced by these organisations. Drawing on the work of Pier Luigi Sacco (system-wide cultural districts), Sara Thelwall (deferred value) and Mark Moore (public value), No Exceptions suggests the possibility of alternative systems for assessing the long-term contribution and worth of smaller art institutions, beyond economic indices. Löfgren presents observations of links between public and cultural life, education and research and personal and political ideology that are forged by the art institutions in the Klister network (Löfgren, 2014). The report is currently only available in Swedish, however translation to English is currently underway.

W.A.G.E

Working Artist and the Greater Economy (WAGE) was founded in New York in 2008. This activist group advocates for a regulation of the fees paid to artists by non-profit art institutions. It hopes to establish a model for best practice between artists and the institutions that contract their labour. After initiating their certification programme in 2010, WAGE finalised their policy on this in 2014. The programme recognises publicly those non-profit art organisations that show a historical and on-going commitment to voluntarily paying artists' fees. It was the first US policy of its kind to develop a sector-wide compensation standard, including clear guidelines which regulate how artistic labour is contracted (WAGE, n.d).

Ask! Has the Artist Been Paid?

At the end of 2012, Visual Artists Ireland (VAI) undertook research to examine the payment of artists exhibiting and taking part in visual arts programming in Ireland. Results revealed the 'endemic reality' of the non-payment of artists in Irish institutions. Of 580 exhibition opportunities covered in the survey, nearly 80% did not provide an artists' fee. In many cases, production costs weren't met either and in 43% of cases artists were asked to fully cover or contribute to exhibition administration costs. Over three quarters of artists received no fee for education or outreach programmes, and of these, less than a third received a contribution towards travel expenses.

In September 2013, VAI published 'Payment Guidelines for Professional Visual Artists'. Based on international best-practice, VAI created payment scales relating to the size of the organisation as well as the experience and reputation of the artist.

Furthermore, the spreadsheet calculator takes into consideration the different work, including installation time for exhibitions and supporting services undertaken by the artist, as well as guidelines for public art commissions and copyright fees (Visual Artists Ireland, 2013). The impact of this document was subsequently confirmed when the Arts Council of Ireland issued a statement outlining that it is now a condition of Arts Council funding that organisations pay artists that they work with.

The Artist-Led Archive – Sustainable Activism and the Embrace of Flux

In 2006, artist and curator Megs Morley initiated The Irish Artist-led Archive – an archival project which assembles an array of documentation relating to over 70 Irish artist-led initiatives, spanning a 40 year period. Forming part of Morley's on-going examination of the history of artist-led and collective practices in Ireland, The Artist-Led Archive addresses an era of extreme political, social and economic flux, from the 1970's to the present day. The project probes the kind of cultural conditions that provoked the establishment of artist-led initiatives, while tracking their financial (in)dependence, organisational structures and life span (The Artist Led Archive, 2006).

The National Campaign for the Arts: Position, Strategy and Colloquia on Research

In reports outlining their position and strategy on research, published in 2013, the National Campaign for the Arts articulated a perceived lack of 'adequate, substantive and rigorous research on the arts and cultural activity in Ireland', and highlighted an urgent need for 'a programme of dynamically planned research...to ensure the funded arts sector continues to serve its social, economic, and cultural function' (NCFA, 2013.b:1).

The organisation advocated 'new attitudes to research' through the use of different definitions, alternative research tools and cross-agency cooperation that could potentially 'improve on traditional models for research within the arts and cultural sector' (NCFA, 2013a: 8). Furthermore, a perceived 'lack of a shared language on value' was identified as a central issue for the arts, both nationally and internationally, with current mechanisms for evaluating 'success' being intertwined with economic profitability.

Calling for more imaginative approaches to measurement, the NCFA expressed the need to challenge existing indices for articulating value, by identifying alternative ways of gathering and interpreting data that 'really connect public life with the arts'. (NCFA, 2013.b:3). In 2014, the NCFA aimed to further expand the research agenda by devising and facilitating a series of Colloquia on Research (NCFA, 2014.a).

This involved four public colloquia in Dublin, Kilkenny and Galway, facilitated by Dr Tara Byrne who was invited to explore considerations of policy and practice in relation to research needs in Ireland, using the thematic headings: 'The Public', 'Evidence', 'Cultural Value' and 'Education'.

Recommendations arising from the colloquia included the commissioning of a comprehensive, up to date literature review of arts research in Ireland, as well as more diverse, practice-based research, unrestricted by economic contributions of the arts to society (see Indecon, 2012). In addition, the NCFA identified a need for broader dissemination of research on the impact of arts participation on young people with regard to education and well-being. The use of existing data-gathering mechanisms such as the National Census were suggested as possible means of gathering data regarding arts-based professions and cultural participation. A need to integrate with European research programmes was

highlighted, as was the need for the establishment of new funding structures through governmental collaborations, with the aim of developing an integrated arts research network.

The NCFA maintains an informed position on emerging discourse on the arts in Ireland. The group regularly comment on newly published material, such as their recent review of two Arts Council publications, 'Inspiring Prospects' (The Arts Council of Ireland, 2014) and 'Arts in Irish Life' (The Arts Council of Ireland, 2015). By closely monitoring the scope and impact of emerging findings, the NCFA is well-placed to identify those areas which would benefit from future research, and to advise on how these findings might contribute to future policy formation for the arts.

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