



Report on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy

Progress on Artists Workspaces.

A central part of any Cultural Strategy is the development of capacity. Capacity building in neighbourhoods, and throughout the City in the area of Culture, means increasing opportunities to participate in quality cultural programmes (access), addressing deficits in infrastructure (artists workspaces) and strategically positioning culture as central to Development (cultural plans in new developments, repurposing of buildings for cultural use, cultural regeneration).

As the SPC is aware the Department of Culture, Heritage and The Gaeltacht, The Development Department DCC and the Arts Council facilitated by The Arts Office have been meeting at a senior level to address the deficit in artists workspaces cause by increased rental and property prices.

After two meetings so far in 2017 and in preparation for a third the thinking on this issue can be expressed in simple terms Are there opportunities for new buildings and if so where? Can older buildings be repurposed? Can any building include businesses, cultural use, community use?

In many programmes e.g Festivals we talk about Flagships, Ships, and Rowing Boats. In Artists workspaces terms a 'Flagship' would be a new building accommodating 30 artists with common areas technology friendly. A 'Ship' would accommodate 10 artists and may share the facility or be an older building. A 'Rowing boat' building is for up to five artists and may be unused retail units, above the shop etc.

Having recently visited Area Offices to discuss this matter it is clear that opportunities still exist across all three categories e.g empty retail units in Ballymun, old storage units in Finglas, buildings that are partly occupied by community groups in Inchicore etc.

The Cultural Strategy states clearly that Culture, Economic Development, Social Inclusion and Environmental Protection form the pillars of City life and I wish to set out that it is the competition between these concerns that is hindering the importance of artists workspaces and indeed the place of artists in the City. Each group seeks their own building even within community development, arts, business etc and very few models of building management allow flexible sharing of common areas with respect for the privacy of specialised use.

Dublin City Council have often been accused of focusing too much on Social Inclusion (an accusation no one should resent) and in the consideration of artists workspaces the place of the artists and their workspace in the community they live and work in, is emerging as an important policy question for all involved.

The long term economic impact of Artists within the City is also underestimated and for example forms an important part of National Tourism Strategy. Finally artists working in the area of climate change and environmental protection are becoming more visible in many of the proposals received by The Arts Office. Shared use of buildings skilfully managed will be an important feature of future artist workspaces.

I wish to recommend to the SPC that a pragmatic but principled approach be continued in the partnership with the Arts Council and the Department and that smaller opportunities for individual artists in local areas be valued alongside larger developments and that, short term, medium term and long term actions are all of value.

Finally as in the Poolbeg SDZ the consideration of creative, community and social use includes all areas of culture in the new developments planned in Dublin. Artists workspaces need to exist alongside, and as part of, libraries, parks, play and recreation areas and well used public spaces.

**Ray Yeates,
City Arts Officer.**