



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Report to Arts, Culture, Leisure
and Recreation SPC

29th June 2020

Item No. 7

REPORT ON ARTS POLICY & STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The recent Government announcement of an additional €25M to support the Arts has recognised the impact of Covid19 on a vulnerable sector. Thousands of Arts events have been cancelled since March with the inevitable losses in income, employment and opportunity. During the lockdown however the Arts provided respite, support and relief in a difficult time and it is gratifying to see the intrinsic value of the arts recognised.

Nothing can replace the experiential, “in the moment” power of the arts experience but the landscape in which the public can visit a gallery, attend a play or a concert or any other live event has changed utterly. Much emphasis has been placed by the media on the issue of physical distancing for the hospitality sector and a call for financial supports to get them back on their feet. Precisely the same is required for theatres and venues who may need to completely reconfigure their spaces and by doing so, wipe out their box office profits or else are forced to raise ticket prices significantly with the knock on effect on access for all to the arts. The reality is that without the support recently announced, smaller Arts venues, Community Arts groups and artists will not survive. The willingness to share their work online and the way they immediately stepped up to the plate to provide arts experiences for the citizen in lockdown was laudable and indicative of the generosity of many artists and arts workers but it doesn't pay their bills. The level of engagement by the public highlights the vital role the arts have in everyday life, a fact often overlooked or taken for granted.

Re-imagining a programme of events for Cruinniu (funded by Creative Ireland and programmed by the Arts Office) in Dublin and presenting it as a digital version have given a number of insights into what the positive and negative legacy of the pandemic has been. The first observation is that artists are extremely agile in terms of their own ability to re-imagine their artform and present it in a completely different context at very short notice. One of the unexpected benefits of translating a live event to online is that it makes it easier to measure its immediate impact through viewer numbers, comments etc. In a way, it provides readymade market research on audience engagement. That the digital version can have a life after the day of an event is also of benefit and makes it more widely available. The huge appetite for arts experiences is reflected in the online engagement with Cruinniu events that surpassed expectations.

In what is a demonstration of resilience many well-known Visual artists are now selling work directly through their social media channels. Many have engaged with #Artistsupportpledge, a worldwide phenomenon, where they sell a certain number of works (for not more than 200 euro). When each Artist has sold over €1,000, they will purchase one other artwork from another artist for €200. That visual artists are also taking matters into their own hands and selling works directly is significant. The field is traditionally reticent about the price of artworks and one can interpret that well-established artists have resorted to selling their work online (even though they are connected to galleries). Either this is a sign of the desperate nature of their income due to the loss of opportunities to sell their work through galleries or artists are

becoming more forthright and more commercially engaged as they need to sell work to survive.

The Arts are now in reset mode. The Fringe Festival and the Dublin Theatre Festival will bravely hold Festivals that try to make the best of reconfigured venues or work outdoors. Culture Night has consulted widely with all presenters and venues and will stage major online events, record and broadcast live events and experiment with how the guidelines permit crowds to assemble. While we hope for a *new normal* the constantly shifting landscape keeps all those working in the arts in a fluctuating, responsive state as we process the long-term effects of the pandemic on our everyday lives. As we attempt to incorporate the new restrictions the pandemic has imposed, it is vital that the space in which different arts forms can function is reimaged and reformed. Bold new steps are needed to reimagine spaces where restricted art forms can take place within the current restrictions and changing guidelines. Sharing information and encouraging safe experimentation will define the work of the Arts Office until year-end at least.

The Artist of course is central to the Arts but those who learn through or participate in the Arts from schoolchildren drawing to adult choirs also provide Artists and themselves with unique opportunities. A diverse and growing audience is also vital that feels welcome and gets into the habit of attending Arts events as early in life as possible. To reflect the broad scope of the Arts both professional and voluntary, Dublin city Council need to focus not just on professional arts organisations who are attempting to strategize and combat the effect of the new restrictions but on community and voluntary arts organisations that are badly hit. These organizations have already been struggling with compliance measures before the pandemic, administration capabilities for these organisations are already difficult to come by and manage and now the pandemic has increased the need for compliance significantly. Voluntary and grassroots organisations are part of the essential arts fabric of our city and country. Serving as a point of contact for new people to engage in the arts, building community engagement and offering entry points into the arts for young people.

Activity Report:

MusicTown, The International Literature Festival, and Culture night will proceed in online and socially distanced formats.

The International Dublin Literary Award (IDLA) and International Literature Festival Dublin (ILFDublin) share a common vision to celebrate world literature. Beginning in autumn 2020, and with plans to align the annual timelines of both events in the future, The Arts Office and Libraries will collaborate to realise this vision more effectively and continue to underline the importance of Dublin as a global literary city.

The LAB Gallery will reopen with two solo exhibitions by Alan Magee and Evgenia Martyosian subject to new health and safety provisions. Online programmes have included live webinars, sharing talks and events online and facilitating Visual Thinking Strategies workshops for local teachers, children and a growing network of artists and educators. The installation of the forthcoming exhibitions by Aoife Dunne and Gemma Browne will take place later in the summer. The Lab rehearsal Studios will open in August.

The Léargas EC funded Visual thinking Strategies Programme transferred its closing events to online webinars This project is led by the Arts office and involved 6 European partners and a network of 40 educators working in the field of visual arts education. It involved training and testing of the Visual Thinking Strategies methodology with primary and secondary teachers, state education agencies, freelance art museum educators and teaching artists. The European partners and the arts office team responded quickly to the cancelled live conference with regular online zoom meetings, and then undertook together a speedy re-design of the

'live' conference into an online version in the form of webinars, films and designed materials for the website www.permissiontowonder.com. The intended audience for the 'live' conference increased by 40% from a proposed 'live' event in Dublin Castle for 160 people giving public access to the online material for over 800 people from all over the world since the end of May 2020.

Dublin City Arts Office and Libraries continue our collaboration to develop **Creative Hubs** for Children, focusing on Ballyfermot, Cabra and Coolock libraries. A summer programme will take place in July and August featuring live online music, puppetry, storytelling, dance and visual arts and illustration workshops; online videos; and inspirational how-to guides for children and parents.

Presenting Partners and collaborating artists include The Ark, Coisceim Dance Company, Puca Puppets, Ceol Connected; Eamon Sweeney and Chris Judge.

Local collaborators: Ballyfermot-Chapelizod Partnership and Northside Partnership (Preparing for Life)

The Arts Office is supporting the Liberties Festival in making the transition to a different kind of Festival this year both practically in the Steering Group and through Arts Grants.

Portrait of Kathleen Clarke

The process to short-list artists for the commission to paint a portrait of Kathleen Clarke, the first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin, is deferred due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The intention is that the commissioned portrait will hang in the Council Chamber in City Hall. The short-listing meeting will be reconvened as soon as it logistically possible and permissible.

Luke Kelly by Vera Klute

The Luke Kelly sculpture by artist Vera Klute has been vandalised by spray painting on four occasions this year. On each occasion the sculpture is successfully cleaned the following morning. An Garda Síochána have arrested two people in relation to two of the incidents. Meanwhile, Dublin City Council is liaising with the artist and continues to explore options with an Garda Síochána including direct CCTV coverage of the sculpture and enhanced lighting to reduce the chance of this vandalism occurring again. The City Council has no plans to move the statue at this time as this art work is much loved and respected by the majority of the community in the Sheriff Street area.

Policy Development.

A new City Arts Plan is set to be published before the end of 2020. This plan will highlight the involvement of multiple parts of Dublin City Council in the Arts from Planning to Events and Festivals, Heritage and Architecture. Public Consultation and SPC review scheduled for September/October 2020.

The Dublin City Arts Plan sets out the range of supports and programmes throughout Dublin City Council's Arts provision and the ongoing initiatives by Dublin City Council that continue to strengthen the Arts in Dublin.

Dublin City Council has chosen three themes to highlight the concerns and trends reported through inquiries by Elected Members on behalf of their constituents, by members of the Artistic community and the Public.

They are:-

1. Infrastructure and the Arts: Built Infrastructure such as Artists Workspaces, Theatres Concert Halls and Office Space for Artists and Arts Organisations.
2. Funding: How Dublin City Council works with other Agencies and independently to provide grants and other financial opportunities to Artists, Arts Organisations, and Communities engaging in the Arts.
3. New Opportunities: What initiatives and strategies will be required to further support the Arts in Dublin? (new Programme for Public Art, increasing the understanding of the development of cultural buildings, new partnerships post Covid and the Arts)

Arts Grants Review. This review initiated at the last SPC meeting has been undertaken by Arthur Lappin (formerly of the Arts Council). Initial study and previous reports to the SPC underline the need to set priorities locally and citywide.

Dublin City Public Art Programme

The second Dublin City Public Art Programme will launch in the Autumn. The three key aspects of linking art, city and public will define the structure of the programme. Dublin City Public Art Programme seeks to engage with the city in its entirety including through the five electoral areas and through community engagement. The approach of the programme is to embrace the diversity of public art practice while being deeply committed to engaging with communities and localities. The timing of the launch in autumn 2020 offers artists opportunities to make new work in the post COVID 19 context when so many artists and arts organisations have suffered due to the pandemic.

Developing Policy on Arts Infrastructure

It is difficult to look at the use of buildings or development of new buildings for the Arts in Dublin without a policy driven strategic approach. Currently sites, the possibility of Arts buildings in new developments and the repurposing of old buildings are all under consideration.

When Local authorities such as Dublin City Council consider buildings for use for recreation or leisure it will traditionally think of community centres, sport facilities, parks and libraries and it supports these important developments through capital and revenue expenditure and through dedicated staff. Local Authorities have far less engagement in Arts infrastructure although they have built and supported Arts Centres, Artists' Studios and buildings such as DCC's development of The Lab Gallery, Dancehouse, Axis Ballymun, and lately Heritage sites 14 Henrietta Street and Richmond Barracks.

This takes into account the direct and indirect ownership that DCC have of key arts and cultural facilities in Dublin such as in Temple Bar (it is important to note that the development of Temple Bar's cultural footprint was initiated by Central Government). This leads to the following question. How and when does the possibility of a site or building that could be used for the Arts arise? How does DCC respond and with what expertise? How many Arts buildings should there be in the Dublin City Administrative Area? What Art Forms should they serve? How many of these should involve the public and how many will not be Public facing? How do we set out a policy that is fair to all Art Forms that provides a set of principles and guidelines when approaching Arts infrastructure? In developing a new Arts Plan and as a strategic objective

the new Development Plan, an approach to these questions will be attempted. As part of this initiative, a URDF funded survey of Artists demand for Artists workspaces is now underway.

Framework Agreement with the Arts Council.

The CCMA have made a National initiative in recent years that each Local Authority will have a Framework Agreement of shared objectives with the Arts Council. Following the signing of this agreement that lasts for eight years further applications by the Arts Office annually to the Arts Council are not required. The assistant Chief Executive has asked the Arts Council that the Framework Agreement for Dublin include all aspects of the City Council's involvement in the Arts.

Creative Ireland Funding

Following on from the success of Cruinniú na nÓg in June. Dublin City Council will now distribute further Creative Ireland funding. It had been hoped this could lead to creative internships but this approach is being reviewed in the current restrictions

**Ray Yeates,
City Arts Officer,
29th June 2020.**