

## NEWS

**PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE**

Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, has encouraged arts organisations to apply to his Department's Philanthropy Initiative for 2013. In 2012, Minister Deenihan launched this initiative to provide an incentive to arts organisations to proactively seek new and multi-annual relationships with sponsors, which would deliver more private sector funding for the arts. Taxpayer funding was made available for organisations that could match this with funding from the private sector. The application form is available on the department's website and applications are dealt with on a first-come-first-served basis. The application form includes a provision that in the event of multiple applications competing for a limited grant allocation, priority will be given to arts in education projects aimed at disadvantaged (DEIS) schools.

[www.ahg.gov.ie](http://www.ahg.gov.ie)

**PARNELL CULTURAL QUARTER**

Lord Mayor Naoise Ó Muirí recently announced details of a new project for Dublin city: the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter. The development will involve the construction of a new and innovative Dublin City Library on the site of Colaiste Mhuire on Parnell Square. The new City Library and the existing Hugh Lane Gallery will be connected by a civic plaza, creating a new intercultural district for Dublin. The project aims to fulfil the city's ambitions for a 'Civic Spine' connecting the capital's key historic places. It hopes to be a new public landmark that will inspire physical and economic renewal. Seed capital for the project is being provided by international real estate investment and services company, Kennedy Wilson, on a philanthropic basis. Preliminary estimates for the full development cost are €60m. The public is being encouraged to participate in the consultation process. A series of public meetings and workshops are being planned to help develop a shared understanding of the expectations and needs of all stakeholders, from individuals, community groups, and public representatives to cultural promoters, educational institutions and businesses. These meetings will take place in tandem with the commissioning of the design and will inform the final design brief.

[www.dublincity.ie](http://www.dublincity.ie)

**BELLTABLE ARTS CENTRE**

One of Ireland's oldest arts centres, the Belltable in Limerick city, has gone into liquidation. It is that understood the decision of the board to liquidate the company came after talks to meet a debt over a major refurbishment failed. The Belltable, which comprises a theatre, art gallery and digital cinema, underwent a major refurbishment two years ago costing almost €1 million. It is believed that the large capital debts incurred from the extensive remodelling of the

centre are the reason behind the move to liquidate. The building where the Belltable is housed is owned by Limerick City Council. The venue closure comes after nearly 32 years in operation.

**SECTOR 30 ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Teaching Council recently welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, that Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 will commence on 1 November 2013. The announcement was made at the INTO Congress in Cork. After 1 November, when Section 30 is commenced, teachers employed in state-funded teaching positions in recognised schools will have to be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from state funds. If you are a teacher who is not already registered, you are advised to register asap.

[www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie)

**TEMPLE BAR CULTURAL TRUST**

On 11 April, it was announced that Temple Bar Cultural Trust (TBCT) is being wound down following critical reports about its finances. This follows a report commissioned by trust owner Dublin City Council, which concluded the move would save the council €800,000 a year. A separate audit highlighted issues relating to the use of company credit cards, expenses and salaries. The decision follows the resignations of artist, councillor and activist Mannix Flynn and Irish Theatre Institute Director Jane Daly from the board, as well as the resignation of chief executive Dermot McLaughlin from his secondment to Derry UK City of Culture. At a board meeting yesterday, the remaining directors considered the 2011 report by Latitude consultants on the trust, which recommended the company be wound down and its functions taken over by the Council. In a statement, the TBCT board acknowledged the achievements of the Trust but said, "the time has come for reinvigoration of what was the cultural remit of TBCT". The Trust, set up in 1991, is charged with promoting events in the cultural area and managed a mix of 28 commercial, residential and retail premises. Dublin City Council is expected to take over responsibility for the promotion of Temple Bar with cultural events run by the DCC Arts Office.

**ARTS INTERNSHIPS**

Kevin The Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, TD and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, TD, jointly launched a new strand of the JobBridge National Internship scheme to provide for internships in the arts sector. In association with the Arts Council, the initiative extends JobBridge to facilitate local authorities support internships for local arts groups and to provide opportunities for jobseekers interested

in careers in the arts. In a statement from the department of AHG, the initiative will see JobBridge extended to allow local authorities support internships for local arts groups. The local authorities will invite expressions of interest from the groups, and recruit interns accordingly who will work with the groups under the aegis of the local authorities. Arts officers in the local authorities will coordinate and govern the internships. The Arts Council will develop a toolkit of best practice to support the initiative. The strand builds on a long tradition of informal mentorship within the arts community. The initiative will extend the level of support that local authorities can give to arts organisations at a time of constrained resources, and will give successful applicants hands-on training and experience of working in the sector. Successful applicants are offered either six- or nine-month internships, along with €50 per week on top of social welfare payments.

**IMMA REOPENING BUILDING**

From 12 October, the Irish Museum of Modern Art will fully reopen at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. IMMA will reopen its main building with a major retrospective of the work of Eileen Gray, designed and produced by the Centre Pompidou, Paris. Eileen Gray at IMMA is a significant exhibition featuring many of the works shown at the Centre Pompidou.

[www.imma.ie](http://www.imma.ie)

**VISIT ARTISTS' STUDIOS**

Visit 2013 is a weekend event which will see artists' studios all over Dublin City open their doors to the public. On Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th May, from 12pm – 6pm, this free event offers curious art lovers an invitation to visit over 250 artists' private studios and gain a first-hand insight into their work. In Dublin City, artists' studios, old and new, exist in a variety of buildings including industrial warehouses and Georgian buildings, converted stables, old fire stations, former shop units and tile warehouse factories. These spaces range from those that are celebrating their 30 year anniversary to those who are only a few months old. You might not be aware that the building you walk by every day is in fact a hub of artistic activity. If you have ever been curious about what goes on inside an artist's studio, Visit 2013 is your chance to find out! Visit 2013 is a free event and each studio will organise its own programme of events such as workshops, talks and performances. Bus, bike and walking tours will also be available. Participating studios include: Black Church Print Studio, Broadstone Studios, Commonplace Studios, IMMA (ARP) Studios, Independent Studio Artists, BLOCK T, Brunswick Mill Studios, Fire Station Artists' Studios and The Red Stables Artists' Studios.

[www.visitstudios.com](http://www.visitstudios.com)

## COLUMN

## Seán O'Sullivan

## Visual Arts Workers Forum

**TO** those working in the arts, the most valuable conversations are the ones that present a new approach to familiar territory. Gathering these approaches together becomes particularly important at a moment like this, when the working conditions of the cultural sector are both under-regulated and highly unstable.

Visual Arts Workers Forum (VAWF) was started in 2011 as a way of opening up such conversations. The forums provide a common ground where anyone involved in the arts can discuss their own working conditions and hear about the circumstances affecting others in the cultural sector. VAWF is not a representative body, nor is it a lobbying group, its principle aim is to give us – as a community – the chance to look into the careers of our colleagues, and better understand both the precariousness and the potential of our own work. VAWF has been primarily co-ordinated by Tessa Giblin and Rachael Gilbourne, with strong leadership from each of the venues that host it, providing the backbone of the discussion topics as well as underwriting the financing for the day.

The first forum took place at Project Arts Centre, Dublin in April 2011, and the second in May 2012 at the Lewis Glucksman Gallery, in partnership with National Sculpture Factory, Cork. Each day included presentations, debates, and informal periods for questions, answers and conversations. There was also plenty of time to meet people face-to-face. VAWF includes contributions from those active in every level of the sector: artists, curators and writers are all represented, as are institutional staff, civil servants and those coming from cultural fields outside of the visual arts.

In both years, the first half of the forums were arranged as a series of rapid-fire presentations. The first year, there were four talks in forty minutes; the following year squeezed twelve into an hour. They included contributions from Clíodhna Shaffrey, Vaari Claffey, Ed Kréma, Alex Pentek and others. Mary Conlon described the early gestation of Ormston House, where passers-by saw her painting the gallery and volunteered their help. Jesse Jones staged artists as being caught in a two-part dynamic: the hustle and the rub. In this metaphor, you can get ahead in the art world, but every gain is offset by an equal and opposite consequence.

Throughout these quick descriptions of strategies to parry the sector's instability, the common refrain was that a climate for successful work pivots on how well arts practitioners can support their peers. It's an understandably crucial element in the development of a field where we're all in negotiation with one another, and where so many peoples' practices depend on working alone. Considering the conditions that are affecting Ireland's cultural sector right now – the prevalence of unpaid internships, the scarcity of fees and the attenuation of both funding programmes and national cultural bodies – there is a great deal to gain from simply gathering and sharing a set of innovative work practices.

Over the past two years, some discussions at the forum have offered valuable insight into how the sector is developing. In his 2011 presentation, Mick Wilson described a 'reputational economy' that affects the visual arts specifically. This is a system where our attempts to work towards an improved livelihood are augmented by the way that we compete with our peers for reputation. Wilson characterised this competition as a zero-sum game, wherein one person's reputation rising means that another's must fall. Everybody doing this together has created an economy where the right to work is now the thing that is valuable. Hence, if we succeed in our work, the reward is enough reputation to qualify us for more work. Throughout all of this, very few rewards take the form of financial gains.

In their 2012 keynote discussion, Sarah Glennie and Mary McCarthy spoke very frankly about the planned amalgamation of the museums. It came at a moment when the sharp corners of the amalgamation were at their most contested and least transparent state. They talked through the different adaptations and strategies that the museums might use to defuse the potential damage caused by the reform plan. Glennie remarked that the museums had been added to a list of 40 quangos that were brought into a government cabinet meeting to be absorbed or abolished.

It is precisely these kinds of discussions that make events such as VAWF so valuable right now; the visual arts could use more transparency and more sharing of information. We need a place to air our problems and, critically, to share our successes. Not only do these conversations give us access to alternative perspectives but also, through having them, it becomes easier to see who is willing to work for the entire sector, rather than just for themselves or their own institutions. The sustainability of our work practices relies on how well we can learn from our peers and, in that sense, the problems that affect the arts are not permanent: they are a temporary and dangerous opportunity. If we can address them as a community, we will be taking a big step forward. So if you're involved in the visual arts in any capacity, then it's your forum – what do you want from it? Planning for the third Visual Arts Workers Forum is underway – contact [vawforum@gmail.com](mailto:vawforum@gmail.com) to suggest issues for future discussion.

Seán O'Sullivan is a writer and curator based in Dublin.

**Editor's Note**

For further details of the lamentable rates of financial acknowledgment and reward currently available to Visual Artists see VAI's campaign and related data sheet, 'Ask: Has the Artist Been Paid?' on our website, [www.visualartists.ie/advocacy](http://www.visualartists.ie/advocacy).