



ART STUDIOS

**Flax Art Studios Ltd**

**Trustees Annual Report 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 for 2022/23**

**FLAX ART STUDIOS LTD.**

**COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NIO 27190**

**CHARITY NO: NIC 100150**

## Chairpersons Report

The business of the AGM is to present reports and accounts to you the members, to elect or ratify members of the Board, pass any resolutions, and to appoint an auditor. It is an opportunity to share the details relating to the running of the studios, normally dealt with by the Board on your behalf, with you the members.

## Governance

The members of the Board ratified at the last AGM in 2021/22 were:

Chair/Company Secretary	Brighdin Farren
Treasurer;	Ceadha Morgan
	Chris Callan
	John Rainey
	Erin Hagan
Co-opted (29/3/22)	Ben Crothers

As Chair I want to thank all of the members for their work on behalf of the studios during the past year.

*Flax continues to aim to significantly contribute to the regions' visual art practice through subsidised studio provision and resources, and is the only studio dedicated to sculptural practice and provision in Northern Ireland. Flax Art Studios provides subsidised studio space for currently 70 of the most exciting artists in Belfast, across Bedford Street and North Street. The calibre and skills of our world-renowned artists is something which we aim to continue celebrating and of which we are proud. Flax hopes to continue to act as a hub for professional development, international networking opportunities; and fostering greater understanding through outreach and engagement activity.*

Since our last AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2021 there have been seven meetings of the Board at which we have dealt with practical issues arising within the studios, finance, and matters relating to strategic direction – and the continued push to becoming more sustainable through the acquisition of a new studio building.

Being here at Bedford Street and our additional premises at North Street demonstrates the need for artist studio provision in Belfast and strengthens our argument for finding a long term, sustainable solution for our studio needs. In April 2022 we moved from Havelock House to Bedford Street where we have been given a three year licence, we moved the remaining artists from High Street in August 2022, and 41 artists

remain in North Street where we have been given a further 9 month licence. We are continuing to work toward a permanent location for the studios.

## **Staff**

- Gail Prentice has continued in her role as Managing Director and Company Secretary of Flax Art Studios in a full-time capacity.
- Martin Boyle continued his role as Facilities Manager on a part-time capacity. (4 days per week).
- Dominic McKeown continued in his role as Workshop Technician on a part-time capacity. (16 hours per week).
- We have successful in creating a new post. The Admin/Marketing Officer will begin next Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February. (16 hours per week).
- We also have two contract cleaning staff on a part-time basis.

## **Sustainable and affordable studios**

The process of collecting evidence on the need for a more sustainable model for artists' studios, and developing plans for achieving this goal have been underway for a number of years. Last year I reported that the Business case commissioned from Venturei and grant-aided by ACNI and BCC, had been completed. This has been recently updated from the learning gained at Havelock House.

Venturei concluded that there is a significant need for studio space for visual artists across Belfast City. This is largely based on the fact that there is a high degree of risk associated with the existing provision/models due to the lack of predictability in relation to their underlying business models combined with the fact that many are operating with uncertain lease agreements with their landlord. It is estimated that some 40% of existing provision may not be available to visual artists by 2020. We are currently working on updating the Feasibility and Business Case. Due to the collapse of Stormont the case did not progress, and we have since completed a refresh of the Feasibility/Business Case which was reported to BCC, ACNI and the APG. We are awaiting capital opportunities to proceed.

## **Election/ratification of Board members**

In accordance with the current Memo and Articles members of the Board are appointed annually and hold office until the next AGM when they are eligible for re-election. It was reported in previous AGM meetings

that that new Board members needed to be recruited, with the aim of extending the knowledge and skills available to the Board which we need in relation to taking on a large-scale capital project, we have been working on continuing to expand the skill set of the board. Since last AGM we received governance training provided by NICVA and it was agreed that the board would be 'members' of the organisation and that there would be at least two artist representatives on the board as members.

## **MANAGING DIRECTOR REPORT**

Gail Prentice gave the following report:

Flax Art Studios has continued to provide a portfolio of subsidised studio provision for the needs of emerging, mid-career and established artists, reaching over 100 artists. Particularly those working with sculpture, installation and new/time based media. We continue to provide long term studio space for at least 70 artists, at least 1 international resident and 1 film maker in residence. We also provided at least 6 production residencies, we also plan to open our workshop facility at Bedford Street and Digital Fabrication to external sculptural practitioners through our open workshop programme and have 35 workshop members.

We currently have 100 artists here at Flax through providing space and resources.

### **Studio Provision (current)**

In 2023 we hope to expand our studio provision to include 12 further spaces in our 29 Bedford Street location. We will also provide at least 6 production residencies, we will also open our workshop facility to external sculptural practitioners through our open workshop programme and have 35 workshop members which we hope to expand upon during 2023/2024.

### **Studio Holders**

Flax provides subsidised studio space currently for at least 70 of the most exciting artists in Northern Ireland including: Declan Byrne, Alastair MacLennan, Elvira Santamaria Torres, Sinead O'Donnell, Deirdre McKenna, Barbara Freeman, Johanna Leech, Conan McIvor, Barry Mulholland, Shiro Masuyama, Erin Hagan, Joey O'Gorman, Martin Boyle, Una Walker, Dave Loder, Stuart Calvin, Gary Shaw, Peter Richards, John Waid, Lesley Cherry, Jan McNeill, Mark Buckeridge, Bojana Yankovic, Lisa Ballard, David Copeland, Katrina Sheena Smyth, Nathan Crothers, Dorothy Hunter and our Film Maker in Residence Laura Conlon.

In our Emerging artist hub/project space at North Street we have: Adam Skinner, Kaitlin Murphy, Charlie Beare, Samantha Robb, Katya Solomatina, Hannah McMurray, Jen Alexander, Alison Rodgers, Zoe Meeks, Ashleigh Wilson, Daniel Anthony, Charys Wilson, Lauren Gibson, Michael Kennedy, David Younglove, Aoife Burns, Natalie Gibson, Tara McGinn, Ronan Smyth, Juste Bernotaite, Michaela Nash, Husk Bennett, Petra Dominova, Louise French, Katherine Paisley, Dominic McKeown, John Connolly, Clare Lyons, Ben Malcolmson, Stephanie Tanney, Hattie Godfrey, Chloe Austin, Leoni Hill, Joanna Palmer and Philip Keers. We also provide space at North Street for the 6 members of the Pollen collective.

## **Partnership/Co-Working**

### **OGU Architects**

Flax provides co-working space to OGU Architects. OGU is a creative design practice run by Chris Upson and Rachel O'Grady, based in Belfast. We look forward to working with them further in 23/24 on the cross over between architecture and art practices. OGU has been working with local authorities to deliver innovative architecture for public spaces such as the Ormeau parklet a temporary trial Project and most recently on the development of the 2 Royal Avenue civic space.

During 2022/23 we have provided space, support and worked in partnership with for example: For Belfast Pride this year we had Rainbow Refugees occupying our project space in North Street. They had an exhibition of masks and banners in the window gallery as part of pride.

The emerging artists have been working to present exhibitions in the North Street. in the North St project space Daniel Anthony, Charlie Beare, Husk Bennett, Silvia Koistinen, Lydia Lenaghan, Nina Oltarzewska and Katya Solomatina presented 'Becoming' curated by Hattie Godfrey 28 th April – 5 th May – exploring how artistic practices transform over time, as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival. From the 9 th – 11 th May as part of the NI Mental Health Festival, 'I hope this finds you well' was presented, the space was transformed for three days into a space for caring, the space was turned into a café, where anyone was welcomed to enjoy tea/coffee and cake, take part in workshops and make art. From the 13 th – 15 th May 'Halfway Out of the Dark' took place in the project space in association with the Mental Health Festival/Revision performing arts festival Chloe Austin, Michaela Nash and Jennifer Alexander hosted a discussion on how mental health plays a crucial role in contemporary live and visual art practice today. From 19 th -28 th May Object + Word took place in the project space featuring the work of Charlie Beare, Chloe Austin, Daniel Anthony McCabe, Husk Bennett and Silvia Koistinen, featuring workshop, discussion and reading. The emerging artists presented 'Shit Show Manifesto' took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> July – were Katya Solomatina invited the audience to help form an experimental manifesto and Husk Bennett led a painting workshop. We will continue to work to support the arts sector through continued partnership.

### **Graduate Residency/Emerging Artist Hub**

Flax has expanded its commitment to supporting graduate artists. We now support 41 recent graduate & emerging artists at our North Street location.

We also provided mentoring support for our Emerging Artist Programme Peter Richards has been leading a Mentoring Programme for our Emerging Artists based at our North Street location. We have been supporting the artists to develop the programme in the Project space and also to do the following:-

1. Build a greater sense of community – to get to know each other and be known by the city's wider visual arts community, and then extending out to forge national and international opportunities and networks.
2. To experiment with ways of presenting works and engaging audiences. Find a way of disseminating/sharing your works that best suit their individual, collective and collaborative practices.
3. Skills and knowledge sharing – perhaps experimenting with ways of swapping time with one another.
4. Exploring ways to individually/collectively generate incomes from their work, services and offshoot/commercially related activities and products. Embracing a sense of both playful and strategic experimentation.

This programme is unique to Northern Ireland, offering essential professional practice skills development to the artists at this vital transition in their artistic careers.

## **Production Residency**

We also provided workspace for Artists who need access to our facilities to produce new work for a specific project but do not require a permanent studio space. Each artist is provided with a workspace and access to wood workshop, casting/plaster workshop, outside workplace, sewing room, digital fabrication lab.

## **Workshop Membership**

We currently provide workshop membership for 35 people and hope to expand on this in 2023/2024.

## **International Residency/Exchange**

During 2022/23 we have worked in partnership with University of Atypical, Coven – Berlin and Videoclub – Brighton, to begin an exchange international residency programme specifically for disabled artists. We also received funding from Fluxus/Institute Francais to provide a 2 month residency for Azzedine Saleck, and we hope to build on the legacy of this residency during 23/24.

## **Temporary Satellite Studio Space at 5-9 North Street**

We have one satellite studio space at 5-9 North Street – specifically to support emerging artists we also provide a project space for pilot, experimental, test projects and exhibitions for the emerging artists.

This space avails us with the opportunity to animate the city centre utilising vacant/meanwhile space in the city centre to showcase the work of our artists, and help us safe guard artist studios. We have been given a further 9 month licence on the premises.

## **(Start Up) Film Maker Residency Programme**

Flax has developed a programme for emerging film makers and provides a studio space for Laura Conlon.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND FEASIBILITY**

Flax has completed the refresh of its Feasibility Study completed in 2015 and Economic Appraisal which was completed in 2017, these were updated in 2021 in line with learned experience through the interim move to Havelock house, which has demonstrated a working model for the future of best practice artist studio provision. The updated case has been presented to BCC, the APAG and ACNI.

Flax will continue to work with Belfast City Council and Arts Council NI, in order to be reactive and identify potential/emerging capital funding opportunities when available.

## **FLAX ART STUDIOS AT BEDFORD STREET AND NORTH STREET**

Flax vacated Havelock House on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and moved the artists from High St and Havelock to its new location on 29-33 Bedford Street for which we have been given a 3 year licence. We have applied for Vacant to Vibrant funding to finish the ground and upper floors of 29, and build 12 new studio spaces and build a casting and spray booth area. Our wood workshop, casting/plaster workshop and sewing room have been moved and relocated on the ground floor of 29 and 31-33 Bedford Street and our Digital Fabrication, and 3 production residency pods are at our North Street location, and will be welcoming spaces for our artists and creatives. Flax Art Studios now operates across two locations 29 – 33 Bedford Street and 5-9 North Street where we have been given a further nine month licence.

In 2023/24 we hope to:

### **PROVIDE ARTIST LED WORKSHOPS, COURSES, TALKS, MASTERCLASSES AND DEMONSTRATIONS**

#### **Casting and Mould Making Master Classes**

**John Rainey** will lead a series of workshops, demonstrations and masterclasses in casting and mould making.

#### **Laser Cutting, Digital and Heat Press workshops and Demonstrations**

Martin Boyle and Dominic McKeown whom have recently received 'Train the Trainer' qualifications will lead an introduction to the workshop and Digital Fabrication Lab – including a Laser Cutting workshop, Heat Press workshop entitled 'The Body As Protest', where the artists and creatives will get the opportunity to design t-shirts/clothing.

#### **Artist Editions:**

This will give artists/creatives the opportunity to develop skills to produce a product/new work. The service will be offered to artists/creatives to approach Flax with an idea, our Technician and Facilities Manager will demonstrate/help the artist/creative realise the piece. Stephanie Tanney will also be working to develop casting kits – so artists/creatives can have a ready to go kit to complete a new piece of work/product. Artist Editions will provide an opportunity to up skill artists and creatives and encourage future usage of the workshop.

#### **Silicone Moulds/Casting Master Classes**

Rachel Palmer Campbell will provide an introduction course to using silicone moulds/casting in different materials such as Jesmonite, Crystacal, resin, and concrete.

#### **Kiln (Awaiting Vacant to Vibrant funding confirmation)**

We have applied for funding for to purchase a kiln, if successful we will provide kiln usage service to artists and creatives, this will be done in house.

### **Graduate/Emerging Artist Mentoring**

Peter Richards will give mentoring sessions to our Graduate/Emerging artists.

### **Geraldine Owens - Sculpting for Film + TV Master Class**

Geraldine Owens has worked as Supervising Construction Sculptor on HBO '*Game Of Thrones*, head of sculpture dept on SciFi's '*Krypton*', *Clay modeller on Disney's 'Beauty and The Beast'* and *Frankenstein Chronicles*. Flax will be presenting three master classes with Owens – *Scaling Up, Polystyrene Carving and Sculpting and Copying from a Cast.*

### **New Workshops led by Martin Boyle and Dominic McKeown:**

- Mindfulness Workshops for Young People in partnership with the Simon Community
- A series of demonstrations and workshops for the Belfast Model School for Boys.
- A series of workshops open for local people to build bird houses.
- A series of workshops in terrazzo.

## FINANCE REPORT

The financial position of Flax art studios was presented. The Audited accounts were available for consideration. GP presented the following report:

### Financial Report

We are currently trying to build our reserves in line with funding regulations and to help us cover the costs of future moves and future sustainability.

#### Bank Balances as at 31/03/2022:

Current account: **TOTAL: £89,742.64**

#### Funding Secured:

ACNI AF: £51,477.00

Belfast City Council CMAF £10,000.00

**Total funding income secured: £61,477.00**

#### INCOME:

Description	PROJECTED INCOME	ACTUAL (AT 31/03/2022)
Studio Rents	£72,470.00	£95,546.88
Production Residency	£5,283.00	£4,589.32
Workshop Fees	£8,840.00	0
ACNI AF	£51,477.00	£48,903.15
BCC CMAF	£10,000.00	£5,000.00
Nerve Electricity/Cleaning	0	£5,576.97
Other/Refunds	0	£8,751.38
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£139,070.00</b>	<b>£168,367.70</b>

**Outstanding Studio Rent: £2053.00**

#### EXPENDITURE CORE:

Description	PROJECTED EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL (AT 31/03/2022)
Staffing	£72,081.00	£69,738.73

Cleaning	£3,000.00	£3,782.98
Rent	£14,400.00	£13,200.00
Lighting & Heating	£40,000.00	£33,622.44
Maintenance & Security	£7,664.00	£2,260.81
Servicing	£3,000.00	£2,522.81
Telephone & Internet	£1,300.00	£1,301.44
Workshop Equipment/Maintenance	£1,500.00	£747.76
Studio Consumables	£480.00	£745.99
Company Registry Shuttle	£25.00	0
Insurance	£1,390.00	£1,126.26
Financial Costs	£2,000.00	£921.02
Memberships	£60.00	£60.00
Printing, Postage, Stationary	£500.00	£201.80
Water	£772.00	£821.42
Car Parking	£200.00	£67.46
First Aid	£225.00	£32.24
Staff Training	£850.00	£178.20
Board Development	£1,000.00	0
Legal Fees	£3,000.00	£1,620.00
Other Development (Satellite spaces)	0	£8,771.29
Artist Deposit return	£390.00	£540.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£153,837.00</b>	<b>£142,262.65</b>

#### EXPENDITURE PROGRAMMING:

Description	PROJECTED EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL (AT 31/03/2022)
Artist Training	*£900.00	0
Artist Mentoring	*£600.00	0
Marketing and Publicity	*£1,100.00	£71.06
Art Workshops	*£5,000.00	0
Mental Hlth Workshops	*£2,500.00	0
Schools Workshops	*£2,500.00	0
Talks/Demos	*£1,000.00	0
Exhibitions	*£1,000.00	£200.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>*£14,600.00</b>	<b>£271.06</b>

\*Funding /Budget to be obtained through grant and/or generated income

#### APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTANT

MB McGrady & Co. be Flax Art Studios was elected as accountant for 2023/24.

## **ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICE BEARERS**

Currently on the Board:

Chair	Brighdin Farren
Treasurer	Ceardha Morgan
	Chris Callan
	John Rainey
	Ben Crothers

Brighdin Farren wishes to step down at this AGM, the Board thanked Bri for her support over the years and wish her well and hope to keep in touch.

It was proposed that Ben Crothers be fully elected as Chairperson for Flax.

Proposed by BF and seconded by CM

BF and the Board members welcomed BC as the new Chair.

It was proposed that Gail Prentice be Company Secretary for Flax.

Proposed by BC and seconded by CC

It is proposed that Ceartha Morgan continue to be Treasurer for Flax.

Proposed by CC and seconded by BF

It is proposed that

Chris Callan, John Rainey continue as Board members of Flax Art Studios.

Proposed by BC and seconded by CM

It is proposed that Lesley Cherry and Declan Byrne as Artist representatives be fully elected as Board members

Proposed by BF and seconded by CC

**Funds in Deficit**

**Funds Materially in Deficit**

As at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 the company had no funds materially in deficit.

Approved and adopted by the Board of Directors and signed of on their behalf.

Brighdin Farren  
Chair

## Reference and Administrative Details

### Charity Name

Flax Art Studios Ltd

### Charity Company Details

Flax Art Studios is a Company Limited by Guarantee:

FLAX ART STUDIOS LTD

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: NIO 27190

Articles of Associate amended by Special Resolution of the Charity passed on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

### Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland: **NIC 100150**

### Principal Address

Flax Art Studios Ltd  
31-33 Bedford Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 7EJ

### Charity Trustees as of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

Mr Ben Crothers	Chair
Ms Ceardha Morgan	Treasurer
Mr Chris Callan	Trustee
Mr John Rainey	Trustee
Ms Lesley Cherry	Trustee
Mr Declan Byrne	Trustee

### Advisors

Banking: First Trust Bank  
University Road  
BELFAST  
BT7 1ND

Insurance: Marsh Ltd  
UK Retail  
Victoria House  
Queens Road  
Norwich  
NR1 3QQ

Accountant: MB McGrady & Co  
Suite 2b  
Cadogan House  
322 Lisburn Road  
BELFAST  
BT9 6GH

