

# Catalyst Arts Trustee Annual Report 23/24



The financial year this report relates to: *1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024*

Name of Charity: Catalyst Arts  
NIC no.: NIC102342  
Company registration no.: NI028068  
Registered address: 6 Joy's Entry, Belfast, B

All charity trustees on the date the report was approved:

Samar Nezamabad  
Emma Quin  
Órlaith Mac Eoin Manus  
Husk Benett  
Seán Ward  
Tori Graham

All individuals who served as charity trustees during the year:

Dominic McKeown  
Rachel Melvin  
Silvia Koistinen  
Husk Bennett  
Emma Quin  
Seán Ward



## **Purposes of the charity**

The main purposes of Catalyst Arts Ltd has always been:

1. to advance and support the career of local emerging contemporary artists in Belfast and Northern Ireland through on site exhibitions at Catalyst Arts Gallery, off site exhibitions and residencies, technological resources, networking and international opportunities.
2. to support local volunteers in Belfast with an interest in the arts and arts management, by advancing their skills in practical aspects of running an art gallery such as installation, funding applications, archiving and administration work.
3. to bring experimental, innovative contemporary art to Belfast and engage the local arts community and the general public with contemporary art through exhibitions, talks, workshops and off site participatory artworks.

The company's objectives are to advance and improve, production and promotion of art and culture and the advancement of education and training in the arts and related subjects in Northern Ireland and beyond ("hereinafter called the "area of benefit") through the provision of workshops, advice, information and training and the organisation of exhibitions, residencies and events and through such other charitable ways as decided by the directors.

The company has power to:

- (a) promote and improve visual, sonic and live art and the production of works of artistic merit by established, new and emerging artists through the provision of workshops, advice, information and training and the organisation of exhibitions, residencies and events and through such other charitable ways as the directors decide;
- (b) promote learning through the arts with the object of developing aesthetic and cultural appreciation by providing an innovative and experimental (visual or multi disciplinary) arts programme in the area of benefit which is freely available and accessible to all;
- (c) promote arts exchange opportunities for emerging and established artists outside Northern Ireland;
- (d) advance the education and training of visual arts and multidisciplinary practitioners by the provision of integrated training and arts management experience, mentoring and information.

[All trustees have had regard to the Commission's Public benefit requirement statutory guidance.](#)

## **Activities**

Catalyst Arts is the longest running artist-led gallery in Northern Ireland. We provide a unique platform for emerging local artists and recent graduates to exhibit their work in a curated context within an accessible, professional and stimulating environment. The gallery fulfils a significant local and national role by touring Northern Irish artists both nationally and internationally. We provide artists with the use of our technological resources, networking opportunities and access to our historical archives.

We are run by a rolling board of up to ten volunteers who curate and deliver high quality exhibitions and projects. We provide to the public an exciting programme of experimental, multidisciplinary contemporary art from local, national and international artists, alongside complementary educational workshops and talks. We aim to maintain and improve our existing relations with other arts organisations and to continue to expand and reach new audiences.

Catalyst Arts is a charity based organisation that supports and promotes the production of innovative and experimental contemporary exhibitions and events that are free of charge and accessible to a wide variety of audiences.

Our organisation upholds a unique position within the visual arts sector of Northern Ireland and offers an unrivalled training scheme for individuals that include curation and arts administration. We do not have any paid members of staff and function through the commitment of seven voluntary co-directors and a strong volunteer community.

We are a member based organisation, whose members benefit from open calls, the use of our resource centre and advice on a daily basis. Catalyst provides exhibition opportunities for artists at the beginning of their careers, enabling the display of work alongside practitioners with an internationally established reputation.

## **Review of Past Programme**

- Healing through Photography, Partnership with Belfast Exposed, Artist Talk with Clare Lyons (3-4 April 2023)
- Bond of Memories, Graduate Award Show with Tomas Monterio (13 April - 4 May 2023)
- Catalyst Cafe, collaboration with Northern Ireland Mental Health festival; Workshops, Events, Screenings, Talks with Mike's Fancy Cheese, Creative Beans Collective and Soup Ink Writer-s Co-op (11 May-20 May 2023)
- Non Violent Kitchen Table, Paulina Siniatkina, (23 May 2023)
- Catalyst Members Show (1 June-30 June 2023)
- Catalyst Art Book Fair,( 6-8 July 2023)
- P(a/u)ddle, Art Auction (20 June-July 8 2023)
- Seven, Keike Twisselmann and Sandra Corrigan Breathnach, performance evening (3 August 2023)
- Cladding, Dominic McKeown Director Show, Charys Wilson and Hazel O'Sullivan (5-30 October 2023)
- FIX 23, live art performance biennial with Olivia Hasset, Sandra Johnston, Bbeyond, Sinead O'Donnell, Venus Patel and Mal Parry (9 November-26 November 2023)
- Pond(er) Rachel Melvin Director's Show, Alivia Goldhill and Andy Leech, (1 February-25 February, 2024)
- Propagate, series of outreach activities and events; Toolbox; mini artist fund, Open Box; archival open mic and poetry evening, Going Up A Mountain; hiking trail with Black Mountain Rewilding Project (10-31 March 2024)

23/24 saw us connect with new organisational partners, increase our footfall dramatically due to our new city centre location, and secure funding from external organisations to improve our premises and fund our work. We started off the 23/24 programming year with a beautiful artist talk from Clare Lyons, in partnership with Belfast Exposed, a regular collaborator of Catalyst. Fully settled into our new premises, we were able to transform the gallery space into a warm and cosy environment for the audience to sit and hear from Clare, joined in conversation with Co-Director Silvia Koistinen.

Celebrating emerging artist talent. The inaugural Catalyst Arts Graduate Award was awarded to Tomas

Monterio, a ceramicist based in Belfast. Accompanying Tomas's pieces, that decorated the gallery and outdoor space, the exhibition was accompanied by a closing night performance by Tomas. We applied for and received funding from The Enkalon Foundation to support the creation of Tomas's work.

Partnering with the Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival, we transformed the gallery space into the Catalyst Cafe, holding a variety of community-focused events, workshops and sessions for people. Catalyst Cafe aimed to debunk the romantic myth of the artist's life through fun and light hearted events - offering support and community for artists and creatives alike in navigating the precarity of sustaining an artistic practice today. We partnered with local organisations and groups like Soup Ink Writer's Co-op, Creative Beans Collective and Mike's Fancy Cheese to host workshops and events across the festival period in May.

Moving on to our Members Show; to lean, fold, buckle, hold, carry, push, pull, support, we exhibited work of our members who financially support the gallery every month. Our members are an essential part of the survival, development, and structural integrity of Catalyst Arts. In return, we look to support our members' practices through opportunity and conversation. We also sought to find new ways of engaging with and platforming our members leading to the development of *Casual Placements* - a members' newsletter where members have the space to share their ongoing works, ideas, and thoughts with new audiences.

With the 23/24 BCC Artist Studios & Maker Spaces Organisational Grant we were able to improve our buildings resources and safety, provide training for directors and purchase signage for our space. We received funding to install fire extinguishers in the space alongside having each director receive Fire Warden training. Receiving funding to improve our kitchen facilities also made our office much more comfortable and welcoming for directors and volunteers to work in. Signage, provided by local company Off The Wall Creative alongside local painter Kate Fossey, has made our space much more recognisable and accessible, increasing footfall.

A core element of our programme throughout 2023-24 was audience engagement. This weaved itself throughout our programming in the form of events and workshops including; a drink n' draw, discussion groups, a publication launch, a reading and listening group, poetry reading events, hands-on workshops, soup making, communal cooking and eating, and live-art performances. These events and workshops allowed for audiences to engage with contemporary visual art in new ways as well as developing skills.

Two Co-Director shows took place over the year, *Cladding and Pond(er)*. *Cladding*, was an installation that brought together Charys Wilson & Hazel O'Sullivan to look at the concern in how material qualities are sensed, interpreted and understood to form space. During our opening night, we had a record breaking 420 visitors throughout the opening night. *Pond(er)*, explored the gallery as a site for shared & intimate experiences, examining how an arts space can encourage communal experience and discourse through tactile and sonic interventions.

<https://www.catalystarts.org.uk/archive>

