



Minutes of the 129th AGM of the Society of Scottish Artists

ZOOM (online)

Sunday 23 June 2024, 11am

1. Apologies:

Judith Chaffer, Patricia Currie, Suzanne Grierson, Fiona Maher, Angela Taylor, Chrissie Heughan, Judith Rowan, Rick Ballard, Deborah Ilett, Phil Lavery, Sarah Stewart, Fiona Ritchie, Catherine Glennie, Vibha Pankaj, Val O'Regan, Cate Inglis, Chris Brook, Gillian McFarland, Vasile Toch.

Present:

Frank To (Vice-President), Michael Millar, Madeleine Mackay, Luke Vinnicombe, Joan Smith, Gill Walton, Greg Bryce, Jamie McAteer, Olivia Turner, Liz Murray, Annie Livesey, Sharon Thomas, Aileen Grant, Miriam Vickers, Fenneke Wolters-Sinke, Judith Shaylor, Theresa Lynn, Louise Ritchie, Sharon Quigley, Ann Louise Kieran, Chrissie Day, Felicity Bristow, Jayne Stokes, Jill Bennett, William Allan, Rowena Comrie, Denise Zygadlo, Jenny Pope, Jude Nixon, Tansy Moir, Lisa Fenton O'Brien, Rachel Duckhouse, Karen McPhail, Sheila MacNeill, Anna Filimonova, Ursula Pretsch, Alex Bell, Liz Fraser, Mary Shaw, Jenny Mason, Cally Nurse, Gayle Nelson, Val McLean, Alexander Nisbet, Rhona Taylor, David Lemm.

Frank To (Vice-President) welcomed all to the AGM.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM held on Sunday 26th March 2023 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

Frank To (Vice-President) summarised the current status of the SCIO process:

SSA is exploring the option of converting their legal form to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated organisation (SCIO), to future-proof our society and function more effectively in a contemporary context. As a member led organisation, the Council have asked for the membership's thoughts on this proposed change. All SSA Members were sent a SCIO briefing document which includes an overview of the consultation with members, Frequently Asked Questions and a link to the Member Questionnaire.

Members were encouraged to have their say by completing the questionnaire by 15th July 2025 and attending the upcoming Q&A sessions. Council was looking forward to receiving member feedback on this.

4. Accounts

Frank To read the below statement on behalf of SSA Treasurer, Rick Ballard:

"In recent communications and quotes in the press from Vasile Toch he referred to "... Administrators' financial and operational irregularities..." that he had apparently identified. In additional correspondence with Council he also queried certain payments that had been made to the Administrators.

I would like to reassure Members that we have of course investigated the position, and we have concluded that there is no substance to his assertion and that there have been no

financial irregularities. Specifically, all payments made to the Administrators need to be supported with appropriate documentation (including receipts for any expenses reimbursed). And only myself, in my role as Treasurer, can make payments to the Administrators.

I should also highlight that the SSA's financial accounts are subject to review by independent accountants, Alexander Sloan, on an annual basis. The accounts for the year ended 30 June 2023 were signed off on a clean basis by Alexander Sloan on 18 March 2024 and are filed on our website under the "Our History" heading.

More generally I can confirm that the SSA's current financial position remains strong, buoyed by the continued strength of our membership numbers. At close of play on Friday 21 June 2024 we had total cash balances of £55,782.79 which provide us with more than adequate headroom to fund the programme of events that Council are contemplating for the next year and beyond."

5. Election of Council Members (Frank To reported)

New call for Council Members is to be circulated in coming months with a list of current vacancies.

Co-opted Council Members Greg Bryce and Vibha Pankaj will move to full Council members.

Standing down: Ewan John (Oct 2023), Carolyne Nurse (Nov 2023), Gabriele Jogelaite, Kerry Jones, Sharon Thomas, Jill Skulina, Jenny Pope (all January 2024)

6. Vice-President's Address

Frank To provided an overview of the activities of 2023/24, and was delighted to report:

15 new SSA Professional Members:

Rachel Duckhouse, Nicola McInally, Valerie Mclean, Valerie O'Regan, Hetty Haxworth, Greg Bryce, Tom Cartmill, Olivia Irvine, Jane Hunter, Alexander Nisbet, Mary May, Judith Shaylor, Marion Barron, Agnes Eperjesy and Amy Dury.

MEMBERSHIP STATS

Current: 1611 Members (31 May 2024) / 8.4% increase since March 2023

2023/2024 Programme

The SSA delivered a full and varied programme of exhibitions and events over the past year.

The Caledonian Club Exhibition (19 June - 14 July 2023)

The SSA exhibited with the Caledonian Club, London providing an opportunity for SSA Professional members to exhibit their work outside Scotland and to have a representation in London.

26 Professional Members were selected to exhibit from a total of 107 applications. Selected works were exhibited alongside invited artist Alasdair Wallace. The exhibition was well attended. Total sales of £380, and an SSA commission of £152.

Big Art Show Paisley (13 August - 18 November 2023)

Once again supporting this opportunity in collaboration with Outspoken Arts Scotland: The Society of Scottish Artists & Outspoken Arts prize: £200 cash prize plus a 1 year's free SSA membership. Selected artist: Daniel Ibbotson

SSA At The Maclaurin Gallery (125th Annual Exhibition) 19 Nov 2023 - 14 Jan 2024

The 125th SSA Annual Exhibition, one of the largest and most prestigious shows of contemporary art in Scotland, was held in Ayr for the first time in The Maclaurin Art Gallery. The exhibition included three paintings by Peter Howson OBE, one of Scotland's leading contemporary painters and patron of The Maclaurin Art Gallery.

144 selected artworks were presented from local, national and international artists throughout five galleries alongside Cutlog's moving image presentation screening 11 works. Committed to supporting the next generation of artists, the SSA selectors chose 12 New Graduate Award winners from the 2023 Degree Shows across Scotland.

The exhibition was highlighted and reviewed in a number of news and media outlets including The Times, The Scotsman, The Herald and The Ayrshire Post.

Accompanying events included guided tours of the exhibition by Vasile Toch to local art clubs and pupils of Belmont Academy, Ayr. There was also a lecture; Ukraine: The importance of Culture in a time of War by Dr Giles Sutherland.

Annual Awards

27 sponsors were contacted (galleries, trusts, art shops, mentors) who had awarded prizes at the 2022 Annual Exhibition, held at the RSA, Edinburgh. Two further prizes were offered by the SSA. 4 other new institutions who had not previously supported us were contacted and we received 18 positive responses, including 1 new sponsor.

17 of the 27 sponsors who offered awards in 2022 supported the 2023 Annual Exhibition (a 37 per cent drop). While the majority did not provide reasons for choosing not to offer an award this year, some did: including specifically noting the West Coast location as a challenge, or that they will renew when the Annual returns to Edinburgh and or the RSA. Few confirmed award givers visited the show but made no selection.

Finally, the Annual Exhibition included a seascape by the late SSA member, Kathleen Conboy, together with a commemorative text and photo. Her son travelled to Scotland to select the recipient of the Kathleen Conboy Landscape Award (£200). Proceeds from the sale of Kathleen's paintings through the SSA (her piece at the AE was sold) or through Torrance Gallery, were donated to the SSA.

Annual Sales

Total Artwork Sales: £4,880
SSA Commission: £0
Catalogue Sales: £472.50
Visitor figures: unknown

General Submissions

Total Artworks: 145
Total Artist Applications: 1226
Total Selected: 126

CutLog | Viewpoint

Total Artworks: 11
Total Artist Applications: 35
Total Selected: 11

30x30 Online Edition

Total Artworks: 271
Total Sales: £1259
SSA Commission: £473.60

SSA Mentoring Programme

The Mentoring programme comprised of 'one to one mentoring' and 'group mentoring' and was delivered to SSA members from July 2022 to June 2023. The overall aims were:

- To provide One to one mentoring support to emerging artists by established artists over a 12-month period. Another two groups of artists undertook 'group mentoring' during the same period.
- To evaluate the project and its role in supporting knowledge and skills development, building confidence and resilience, rebuilding ambition, professional outlook, and fulfilling artistic aspirations of Scottish artists post COVID
- To utilise learning from the mentoring project evaluation to inform development of new mentoring and artist support initiatives by the SSA

A range of themes emerged from the analysis of 'one to one' mentoring feedback:

- Achieving set goals: SMART goals such as developing good studio habits and conducting research and drafting successful applications were achieved in the first half of the mentoring period.
- Gaining confidence and momentum: Six months into the mentoring project majority of mentees were employing their short-term goals into day-to-day work. They were gaining confidence and insight into own practice, learning new skills, experimenting with techniques, seeking collaborations and some were creating new themes/works. Developing goals and actions had provided clarity and enthusiasm to their direction of travel.
- Building resilience: The feedback showed that artist mentors were instrumental in supporting the mentees to persevere and take any knock-backs as an opportunity for learning.
- Moving towards professionalism - Towards the end of the project there was clear evidence to suggest that the mentees were moving towards professionalism with clearer idea of longer-term goals, increased confidence, a sense of independence about planning and review of own work and making applications.

The participants of 'group mentoring' benefited from the programme through developing peer relationships and sharing knowledge and experience. It is apparent that this project was of extreme benefit to both mentors (experienced artists) and the mentees (emerging artists) and recommends that ongoing mentoring support for SSA members should be made available.

Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented at

1. Connect and Grow Exhibition (17 Nov. 2023): SSA Mentoring Programme Learning Event, held at Cass Art Space, Glasgow. This event was attended by the participants of the SSA Mentoring Project and Creative Scotland.
2. Scottish Executive Parliamentary event (6th March 2024) chaired by Clare Adamson MSP which had invited guests from various organisations.

The findings and recommendations emerging from the project evaluation were very well received at both events.

Parliament Event: 6 March 2024, SSA, Making Scottish Art Matter since 1891

The Burns Room, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

The event aimed to raise awareness about the contribution of SSA to Scottish culture and to share the opportunities that could be created for art through potential collaboration with the Scottish Government. The event was attended by SSA Council and invited guests which included parliamentarians, academics, museum curators and artists. Speeches included overview of SSA history, SSA structure, aims, and presented the findings and recommendations emerging from evaluation of Mentoring Programme for Artists (funded by Creative Scotland) and included talk by Rhona McGuire on the subject of challenges faced by new graduate artists.

Clare Adamson, MSP, complimented SSA on its activities and achievements and thanked everyone present for attending the event.

Engramme Exchange (10 May – 16 June 2024)

Successful solo exhibition *Vivarium* at Engramme, Quebec closed earlier this week with selected artist SSA Professional Member Jodi Le Bigre. 10 artwork sales from this.

Delighted to be collaborating with Engramme once again this year, a twelve-year-old partnership creating a vibrant dialogue between artists based in Scotland and Canada.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

Instagram

Current followers (21 June 2024: 11,851)

12.8% increase since March 2023 (March 2023: 10,500)

Facebook

Current followers (21 June 2024): 6,800

4.6% increase since March 2023 (March 2023: 6,500)

Threads

Current Followers (21 June 2024: 1838)

X (Twitter)

Current Followers: 4804

2024 - 2025 Programme

Essay Project (April 2024 - Ongoing)

The Essay Project was launched in April 2024 to allow members to express ideas behind their concepts and practice in a written format. Every month a written piece is selected and published on the society's website. It is hoped that this will lead to a deeper insight into the work of SSA members and spark a bit of healthy contemporary discourse. Response to date has been very positive, with our third essay scheduled to go online before the end of June. We encourage members to consider submitting a short piece of writing for consideration and hope that the initiative continues indefinitely.

Two member exhibitions this summer at Gairloch Museum and Old Gala House.

Ulaidean / Treasures | SSA at Gairloch Museum (6 July - 28 September 2024)

We are delighted to be working alongside Gairloch Museum for our first collaboration with them. The title of the exhibition is in both Gaelic and English (pronounced OOLIAN) Ulaidean/ Treasures is on for 3 months this summer, opening the day after the election and on till the end of September. It was great to have over 200 submissions, the high quality of the work made selecting to 50 a difficult task, the works chosen show a full breadth of disciplines, and demonstrate the talent of our members. Why not take a trip to the Highlands to check it out.

The exhibition will include work by invited artist, Pen Reid.

Total artworks: 49

Total Artist Applications: 211

Total Selected: 48

SSA AT OLD GALA HOUSE | THREADS (20 July - 30 September 2024)

The SSA was delighted to present members with an opportunity to exhibit work at Old Gala House in Galashiels with the compelling theme of 'Threads'.

The exhibition will include work by invited artist Denise Zygadlo as well as artists selected from the open call.

Total artworks: 41
Total Artist Applications: 122
Total Selected: 40

Big Art Show Paisley 2024 (30 August – 16 November)

We were delighted to be once again supporting this opportunity in collaboration with Outspoken Arts Scotland: The Society of Scottish Artists & Outspoken Arts prize included £200 plus a 1 year's free SSA membership

The Vice President and Council look forward to visiting in August to select this year's winner.

Eichstätt Residency (October 2024)

Joanne Pemberton was selected for the Eichstätt Lithography Residency 2024.

This bi-annual Lithography Residency Prize includes a period of time working in the studio and a solo exhibition with an opening reception. It is offered by SSA working in partnership with Li Portenlänger, Director of Lithographie-Werkstatt Eichstätt in Bavaria, Germany.

Upon completion of the residency this Autumn, we are looking forward to exhibiting Joanne's resulting work at the 126th Annual Exhibition.

126th Annual Exhibition | RSA (16 November – 11 December 2024)

2024 marks the return of the SSA Annual Exhibition to the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh. The SSA Annual Exhibition is one of the largest contemporary art exhibitions in Scotland. The exhibition is produced entirely by artists with no public funding and will take place at the Royal Scottish Academy, The Mound, Edinburgh from 23 November – 11 December 2024.

The open calls now live and selection of artists for this year's New Graduate Awards is almost complete.

The exhibition will include work selected from the open calls as well as the New Graduate Awards, SSA 30x30, and invited artists from the SSA Engramme Exchange, Eichstätt residency and SSA Awardees.

Frank To went onto state that with regards to the international exhibitions planned for 2024/2025, after careful consideration, the Council had decided to postpone international exhibitions (Bucharest, October 2024 and Amsterdam 2025) to first better assess what will be financially sustainable for the Society going forward.

7. Open Discussion

Starting with the members questions received in advance then taken from chat box in Zoom:

Q1. Do the SSA have any disability policies in place? (Gyllian Thomson)

Frank To noted the need for the Society to review this element with each partner organisation and to ensure all activities are inclusive.

MM added that if there was any member that had specific knowledge in this area and could support Council that they can become a co-opted member to improve our offer for all members. FT added to this that any knowledge within the area of mental health would also be a welcome addition to Council.

Action: Disability policy to be highlighted at the next meeting of Council.

Q2. In order to give all members opportunities to exhibit in the yearly SSA exhibition, can there be a written rule that artists who have exhibited in two or more consecutive years cannot exhibit for a year. (Judith Shaylor)

Judith Shaylor added that this question was from a point of view of bringing new art to the wall to keep exhibitions interesting, adding that this would be of great benefit to the society.

Frank To opened the discussion to the attendees in the meeting.

Greg Bryce stated that he has had the honour of being on a few selection committees and reinforced that these are anonymous. Some works are more recognisable, and some members have very distinct works, however the aim is always to do a good exhibition, and selections are made on quality alone. Noted that it could be difficult to penalise people for good work, though her concern was understood.

Frank To noted that there is also a clause for submissions, where the work must not have been shown in the RSA Annual or New Contemporaries, or previously shown in any SSA, VAS or RSW Annual exhibitions.

Aileen Grant added that what it would be helpful to understand what the aim of the Annual Exhibition is, and that it would be interesting to know how many of the membership have not been accepted into an Annual.

Annie Livesay noted that there is plenty of new work with the New Graduate presentations, and on the other side, that it can be comforting for people to come and see work that they recognise.

Gill Walton responded: The purpose of the Annual Exhibition is to showcase the best of contemporary art in Scotland from our membership, and it is the aim of the selectors to choose exemplary works for this, and this is completed anonymously. The 30x30 is there to give all members the opportunity to be part of the Annual in a different context. Then there is the other different exhibitions in different venues throughout the year, specifically programmed to encourage members that might not fit into the Annual to show their work.

Theresa Lynn remarked on the impact on members, those that are coming into their own, when they are selected for exhibitions. Once they have been selected, and then not in subsequent years, that it can become a negative thing. The focus on consistency perhaps isn't good, when same people are being shown. Though acknowledged it is becoming quite complex and difficult to administer, and agreed with the clause that work shouldn't be submitted if shown elsewhere.

Ann Louise Keiran commented that it is perhaps worth keeping it in mind with the growing membership, the showing capacity is at a much-reduced rate. The unsuccessful works are still of good level, and it might be worth showing these elsewhere.

Liz Murray requested further guidance on submission information for open-calls, like DPI. Madeline Mackay agreed that a step-by-step guide could be produced to support members in these areas.

Frank To suggested an online session to show members how to prepare images of their work for submission and that this will be brought to Council to pursue.

Action: Member how-to-guide to be produced

Theresa Lynn asked if the Council members are alright, following the maelstrom that Council have been dealing with recently. Noting the voluntary roles and stress that comes with this.

Both Frank To and Madeline Mackay thanked Theresa for her comment. It was noted that the Council have a duty of care to both SSA employees and the membership and MM added that as a Council, whilst it has been a lot to deal with, the Council have been working together well which has made it easier.

Council Member Luke Vinnicombe also thanked Theresa for her comment and thanked everyone from the membership for their support over recent events. He went on to add that the Society doesn't currently have the resource or capacity to collect data on who doesn't get into shows. Going forward into 2024/25 the Council aim to further address this and have exhibitions that actively try to promote certain styles of work and opportunities.

Gill Walton thanked Madeline Mackay and Frank To for hosting the meeting today under difficult circumstances. She noted the absence of SSA Admin, who would normally be present but for good reason are not.

Frank To asked the attendees if the meeting link circulated to those registered worked ok for them, and many confirmed it did.

Judith Shaylor asked about the international exhibitions element, and suggested her previous contact with Gibraltar could now be reviewed post Covid.

Gill Walton added that as a Council international exhibitions are still very much of interest, they first want to progress with the SCIO to reduce financial risk relating to these and create a policy whereby all aspects are considered thoroughly.

Q3. A member asked about the Administrators not being in attendance and if they were still in situ.

Madeline Mackay confirmed that the SSA Administrators are still very much in situ, and were part of preparations for today's meeting.

Louise Ritchie noted her past presidential support to Council and everyone involved and acknowledged recent challenges. She requested that the archive on the website be further populated with the array of different and international projects undertaken in the history of the Society and reminded that the society is a collective, and that members can bring their ideas for projects to Council to pursue.

Jamie McAteer added that the archive is still active, with all the data on file so that it can be repopulated onto the website. It would require substantial admin time to this, and therefore with the move to become a SCIO funding could be sought to support this.

Council Member Michael Miller added his thanks to the membership for the Council support received today and the weeks leading up to this meeting, and asked for their continued support going forward as they try to move forward constructively.

Madeline Mackay reminded everyone of the upcoming Special General Meeting on 7th July 2025 and the importance to attend to have their say.

Fenneke Wolters-Sinke raised the earlier question around the 75 members required for this upcoming meeting.

Gill Walton answered that a minimum of 20 members is required to be in attendance for a quorum and that three-quarters (75%) need to be in support of the point to pass the vote in accordance with the Constitution. Noting the more people that participate in the vote the more weight that will carry. Madeline Mackay added that it is an important way for the membership to have their say on how the SSA is run going forward.

Jamie McAteer suggested that given the high membership numbers and low meeting attendees online that members are given another route to vote on such an important decision. Madeleine Mackay acknowledged this important point.

Sharon Thomas asked for clarification on who is on current Council and when the vote on the new Office Bearers would be.

Frank To listed the Council Members present in the meeting: himself as Vice-President, Gill Walton, Madeline Mackay, Luke Vinnicombe, Greg Bryce, Michael Miller and Joan Smith and clarified that the vote on the new Office Bearers will be part of the upcoming Special General Meeting.

Q4. Question about an in-person AGM meeting.

Online meeting benefits were discussed and Council stated that they are reviewing the hybrid option going forward.

9. AOCB

SGM Sunday 7 July, 11am.

Meeting closed 12.14pm
