

**Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations
feedback**



Crafts Council Submission – November 2017

Do our ambitions feel right in the context of arts organisations seeking to re-imagine their 'civic role' in innovative and impactful ways?

As the national agency for craft, the Crafts Council's goal is to build a strong economy and infrastructure for craft, to grow and diversify audiences, and to champion high quality craft practice nationally and internationally. In this role, we both recognise and applaud the re-imagining of the civic role of arts organisations, as outlined in the Inquiry.

Craft not only drives the creation of unique and beautiful objects, it engages people in making as a career, as an everyday activity in the home or community and as a creative journey in the classroom, meeting a desire for meaning and individual expression. It helps to forge and shape the character and communities of the country's diverse neighbourhoods and, as such, speaks to exactly the values and ambitions expressed through the inquiry.

As we plan for our 50th anniversary in 2021 and finalise our business plan 2018-22, our approach is informed by the concerns and opportunities identified by our sector. We will focus on our role as enabler, supporting organisations and individual to flourish, creating new ways for new audiences to get closer to makers and making. In pursuit of our goals, we will both seek to support the Inquiry's ambitions and challenge ourselves and our activities in the context of the good practice highlighted in the Inquiry Phase One report.

We would also draw attention to:

- the work of Createquity, described in a 2016 piece entitled "Making Sense of Cultural Equity", that highlights the dilemma at the centre of a conflict between the 'Diversity' vision of success (which wants to see fully integrated, large-budget "anchor" institutions providing benefit to entire communities) and the 'Redistribution' vision (which holds that we should be shifting the balance of arts policy and philanthropic resources toward organizations and cultural traditions rooted in historically marginalized communities, including communities of colour);
- Professor Mark Banks' view on 'creative justice', in a Cameo Cuts pamphlet published by Leicester University, in which he considers the various sociological approaches taken to studying work and education in the cultural industries. He suggests a new framework for tackling some of the inequalities and injustices occasioned by such work. The summary outlines three concepts

– ‘objective respect’, ‘parity of participation’ and ‘reduction of harms’ – which might help us to better focus on the issue of ‘creative justice’, and how best to achieve it.

Do you have examples of particularly strong practice – and could you work with us to disseminate this?

The Crafts Council’s programme of activities - from temporary exhibitions to professional development, craft clubs to our young people’s programme - takes place in galleries and education spaces, pubs and women’s institutes, addressing all three levels of Alistair Hudson’s history of museum development. Examples that we would propose as strong practice include:

- The Craft Club network champions craft groups in schools, galleries, libraries and anywhere else you can bring people together to share craft skills. The project provides support for Craft Club leaders via resources, tutorials and competitions. Communication between clubs is encouraged via a regular newsletter, social media feeds, and skills sharing events. In 2017 we have:
 - 78 active Craft Clubs with 120+ on the map
 - 1400 mailing list recipients
 - 116 annual survey respondents
 - 2 training days for 28 Craft Club leaders
 - 3-4 creative projects shared by Craft Clubs quarterly
 - 53.4K people engaged through Craft Club social media
 - 4 creative tutorials created yearly
 - A programme of events
 - Loan boxes being planned
- Make:Shift:Do is the Crafts Council’s annual festival of new making. A celebration of craft innovation, it offers families, children, and young people hands-on experiences of emerging craft technologies, new materials and digital making. By working with makerspaces, fab labs, and digital making centres, Make:Shift:Do actively involves a diverse audience with cutting-edge approaches to making, changing perceptions of the meaning of ‘craft’ and revealing its real world potential. In 2017 we have:
 - Three pop-up events across the year
 - A two-day festival taking place at the end of October with targets of
 - 30 venues offering 60+ half-day sessions for approx.100+ participants per venue
 - 3000+ participants across all venues
- Hey Clay! is an annual celebration of clay, giving everyone the chance to unleash their inner potter. Across the country - studios, workshops, museums, galleries and colleges host free events to allow everyone the opportunity to try their hand at pottery. We deliver this through listings on our website that are promoted and celebrated. Hey Clay! is part of the larger strategic campaign, Get Creative!, with Crafts Council sitting on the steering group alongside VAN, BBC, Fun Palaces, Family Arts Campaign and others. In March 2017 Hey Clay saw 102 participating venues (280 people involved in delivery) offer 165 half-day

sessions to 6,373 participants, including 2,601 under 16s, over two-days. The value of these sessions exceeded £43,500.

- **Hidden Agenda: Socially Conscious Craft** is a partnership exhibition with Berwick Visual Arts, curated by Doug Jones, that explores the use of craft for social comment and provocation. It presents works by makers and designers who use craft for social comment and provocation. In response to Jones's politically and socially driven installation, 11 objects from the Crafts Council Collection were selected to introduce socio-political subjects, including: societal injustice, subversion, propaganda, remembrance, monetary value and economy in materials and production methods. Touring venues that take the show put out a local call for work that can sit alongside the objects and become part of the exhibition.

We disseminate information about these programmes through our networks and would be happy to work with the Inquiry to disseminate them further.

Do you believe these initiatives would be useful to those working in the sector?

We use the term 'Everyday Making' to encompass the development of our existing Craft Club network, Hey Clay! and Make:Shift:Do festivals, increasing our reach to new audiences and providing support to new makers and craft organisations. We believe that this model of building on other organisations' own audience engagement can be useful to others working in the sector.

Do you have comments on what sort of training or development, guidance, tools or support would be likely to be most useful?

We suggest that tools building on Alistair Hudson's version 3.0 organisational model would be useful, focusing on how to work within a constantly changing dynamic between leadership, audience, place and authority.

Tools that speak to both national and community arts organisation about the notions of and practice in distributed leadership in an arts context would be helpful. In this context, images may work best to illustrate the importance of adjusting styles of leadership to context – think of the contrasting views of leadership represented by images of: a figure in front of an audience, a collection of pink pussy hats, and a murmuration of starlings.

Do you think that these are the right funding issues to focus on?

Yes. The What Next? consultation and analysis appear very thorough.

What appetite exists for collaborations between funders?

In our experience large grant making trusts are all networked in and often share ideas. Funding from one will often leverage another.

Are there funders interested and able to work with us to take initiatives developed with our initial funding forward? Please list below:

None that we would specifically highlight.

What partnerships might we seek to build nationally or locally to improve the policy environment?

In our experience What Next? and the Creative Industries Federation have been instrumental in giving the sector greater voice and in increasing partnership working. We would suggest that the Inquiry might build on these mechanisms. In particular the focus should be on strengthening the local dimension, building on existing local agencies and networks and surfacing local activities that network outside of the more familiar social media networks.