



Arts Council of Northern

**ART FORM AND SPECIALIST  
AREA POLICY 2013-2018**

**VISUAL ARTS**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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[www.artscouncil-ni.org](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org)

## Preamble

The Visual Arts Policy has been developed in line with *Ambitions for the Arts*, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's five-year Strategic Plan for the Arts, 2013-18. The overarching priorities of the Plan – champion the arts, promote access, build a sustainable sector – are reflected across the set of the Council's Art Form and Specialist Area policies, 2013-18.

## Introduction to Visual Arts Policy

Visual expression is an essential part of human existence, communicating emotions, ideas and experience. Visual art can evoke intensely private and personal responses as well as being a part of a collective experience.

The term Visual Arts is difficult to define with precision and clarity. It defies rigid parameters and codification. It is not specific to certain media, techniques, place or modes of presentation. The 'traditional' elements of painting, printmaking, sculpture, photography and drawing are now located with a much broader spectrum of tools, methods and media. For over a generation artists have utilised film, sound, video and made performance. Visual arts are increasingly presented outside the gallery and can be ephemeral.

As with other art forms, the Arts Council's interest in a wide and diverse sector is particular and specific. It is concerned with contemporary visual arts and supporting work by living artists; work that is of the highest quality and is innovative, challenging and experimental.

This work must be accessible to a broad and developing audience in Northern Ireland and the Council supports an infrastructure of galleries and organisations which commission and present visual arts. There is an imperative to provide an educational function as part of their core activities and to aspire to an inclusive approach to building audiences.

Visual arts begin with artists and the Council remains committed to supporting individual artists throughout the development of their careers. It will continue to offer a range of funding opportunities that will encourage excellence in the creation of new work. It is also committed to improving the facilities for artists in Northern Ireland, particularly the improvement of studio and resource provision.

The Council recognises that its specific interest is not divorced from the broader cultural and historic context of visual arts. Council works closely with other organisations and agencies with a remit for, or interest in, visual arts, and is committed to the continuing development of these relationships. Most notably, the University of Ulster Belfast School of Art and National Museums Northern Ireland build important bridges to the past and the future.

The Council's Art Collection is a resource that is used to promote the work of artists living and working in Northern Ireland and it is drawn on by Museums and Galleries in Northern Ireland and further afield. It also allows us to introduce good quality contemporary art to a wide range of audiences in a range of venues.

The Council will continue to support and develop the *Own Art Scheme* which aims to make buying art accessible to as wide a public as possible. The scheme provides the purchaser with interest-free loans, repayable over a period of 10 months. This scheme supports galleries, artists and the public.

Visual arts are a driver within the creative industries, a key contributor to the arts environment and an essential part of cultural environment in Northern Ireland. The Council will work to ensure they are valued as such.

## Funding Objectives

- develop an enhanced and sustainable infrastructure for the production, exhibition and dissemination of visual arts in Northern Ireland;
- work with organisations to develop new and existing audiences for contemporary visual arts;
- encourage appropriate, innovative and sustainable education and outreach programmes;
- encourage critical debate, analysis and archiving of visual arts in Northern Ireland;
- support new and established artists in the creation innovative, challenging and experimental work;
- encourage emerging artists and new curators to develop their careers in Northern Ireland;

- stimulate the market for visual arts in Northern Ireland;
- raise the profile of artists and visual arts from Northern Ireland internationally;
- create and support opportunities for artists, curators and organisations to work trans-nationally.

## Additional Information

### **'Ambitions for the Arts' Five Year Arts Strategy, 2013-2018**

[www.artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/strategy](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/strategy)

### **Art Form and Specialist Area Policies, 2013-2018**

[www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts](http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts)

Acquisitions	Drama
Arts & Disability	Film & TV
Arts & Health	Intercultural Arts
Arts & Older People	International
Architecture	Language Arts
Building Peace through the Arts	Literature
Carnival Arts	Music & Opera
Circus Arts	Public Art
Commissioning	Traditional Arts
Community Arts	Visual Arts
Crafts & Applied Arts	Voluntary Arts
Dance	Youth Arts



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