

Values



Framework

AIC - SCHEME - ARTIST - MENTORING - AWARD



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Led by Áine Crowley and Jennifer Fitzgibbon (Create)

The Artist in the Community

Scheme Artist Mentoring Award

is for collaborative socially engaged artists, or artists transitioning into collaborative socially engaged arts, who wish to avail of a focused period of mentorship to develop and consolidate their practice.

The Artist Mentoring Award is funded through the Artist in the Community (AIC) Scheme, managed by Create on a devolved basis for The Arts Council. The AIC Scheme is a primary vehicle for collaborative socially engaged arts practice in Ireland.

The Artist Mentoring Award is for emerging collaborative socially engaged artists **or** artists who have a midcareer/established individual arts practice and are transitioning into collaborative socially engaged arts who are seeking support from a critical friend/guide as they develop their practice.

The award is aimed at



artists who find themselves on the margins and feel they are underrepresented in the field of collaborative socially engaged arts, for example due to displacement, migration or disability



artists who are experiencing a particular practice-based challenge in developing their collaborative socially engaged arts practice

For the selected artist mentees, the award offers an **eight-month period** of capacity building and arts practice development through dialogue with an experienced collaborative socially engaged artist mentor.

The **Artist Mentor Panel** is made up of experienced collaborative socially engaged practitioners who specialise in a range of artforms, and who have worked with diverse communities from across Ireland and beyond. Each brings in-depth knowledge of the field, and a deep awareness of key considerations when working with communities, including in sensitive settings and where projects are addressing significant social issues.

01

[WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MENTORING?]

SUPPORTING ARTISTS

In essence, the Artist Mentoring Award is a support programme for artists. It was introduced to support artists at different stages of practice. Specifically, it seeks to buttress artists at those pivot points in their practice, when a shift is needed or wanted. It sets out to assist artists at points of challenge and confusion, when something new needs to emerge and evolve. We see our team of mentors as guides or coaches, someone on your side who knows the territory, in this case, the field of socially engaged art practice.

It is also a place to build the mentees' capacity to work in live spaces of practice in relationship with community. The programme supports the artist to face challenges in their practice, building their capacity to make the work they want to make while balancing the risks engendered by new directions and departures.

MENTORING IS NOT

Each mentor brings to the programme their own knowledge, experience and ways of working. Therefore, it would not be useful to define the Artist Mentoring Award programme according to a highly rigid set of methods. Instead, in the spirit of managing expectations, we can tell you what it is not. For example, while we have likened the process to coaching, it's not life coaching. The focus, if you will, remains firmly on the artists' practice and process within the field of collaborative socially engaged art.



While the mentor greatly values listening, they are no pretender to therapy or counselling. Equally, we want to distinguish the Artist Mentoring Award approach from modes of relation more typical of formal educational settings: for example, the relation between the student and the tutor. There may be homework involved but, in our programme, it is deployed as a pedagogical device outside of any educational power relation. It's not a school. It's not teaching. It's non-directive.

That said, it is not a purely theoretical exercise where process is considered out of relation to praxis. At the same time, it is not a box-ticking exercise where certain prescribed outcomes are doggedly pursued.

KEYWORDS

[what do we mean by mentoring?]

support for artists

stages of practice

pivot points

challenges

building mentee capacity

relationship with community

balancing risks

new directions

departures

mentor as guide

mentor as coaches

knowing the territory

socially engaged art practice

artistic practice

listening

homework

non-directive

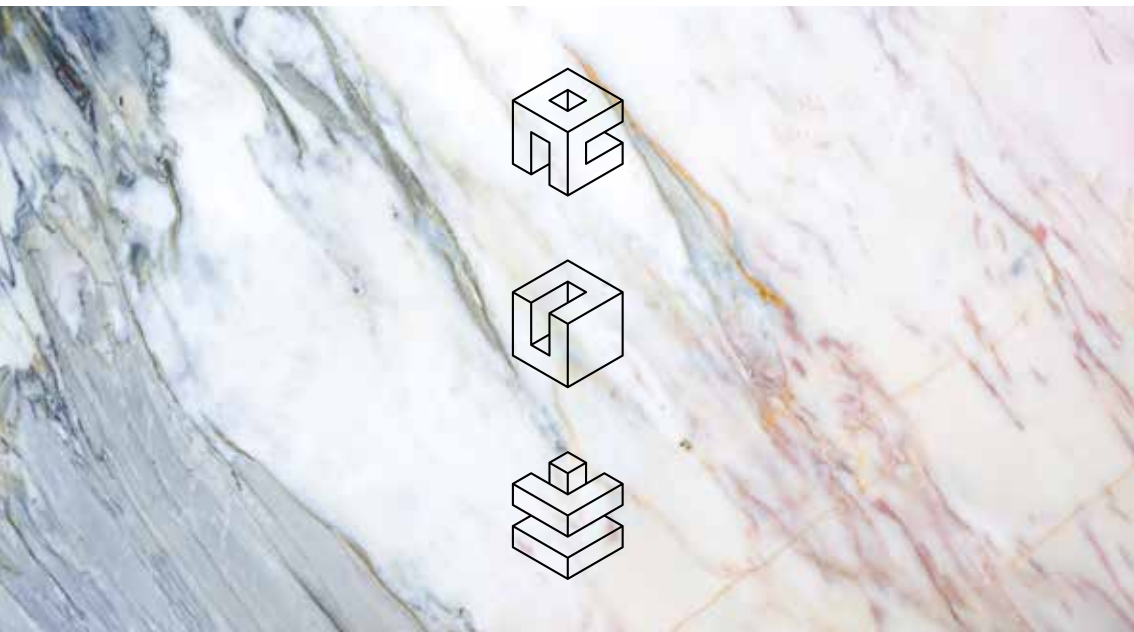
relation to praxis

full and meaningful engagement

[WHO IS THIS PROGRAMME FOR?]

This mentoring programme is purposefully attentive to the different career stages of artists. The Artist Mentoring Award programme is committed to meeting artists where they're at in their practice. If you are an artist who is genuinely interested in working with people but may not have accessed the language or networks yet, this programme is for you. Equally, if you are a more seasoned warrior in the field, perhaps combatting isolation and alienation as you move from one situation to the next, this programme is for you.

It's an opportunity for emerging collaborative socially engaged artists, artists who already have a midcareer/established individual arts practice but are transitioning into collaborative socially engaged arts for the first time, artists who find themselves on the margins and feel they are underrepresented in the field of collaborative socially engaged arts or artists who face a particular challenge in developing their collaborative socially engaged arts practice. It seeks to be relevant and responsive to all the different stages of professional development. Whatever point you are at this is an opportunity to be part of a structured, well-resourced mentorship programme where you can take time out to grapple with your own challenges and questions.



SOME BAD REASONS FOR ENGAGING WITH THE PROGRAMME

Over the course of the previous twenty years, collaborative socially engaged art has become more recognised within the art world and the academy as a distinct discipline and practice. As such some artists without a genuine interest in collaborative socially engaged practice have sought mentoring support with a view to gaining some fluency in the language of the field. It is as though they have some code breaking exercise in mind for future grant applications. In our experience this is an unsustainable disposition towards the programme from the outset. Equally, it does not go well when the primary motivation of the mentee is to gain access to aspects and places connected to the mentors' practice. In short, this programme should not be regarded as a calculative step on to "the funding ladder" (though it can't hurt) or indeed an opportunity for elevation by association.

genuine interest
working with people
language
networks
seasoned warriors
combating isolation
from situation to situation
established artists
mid-career artists
structured programme
well-resourced programme
time out
challenges
questions
purposefully attentive

different career stages

meeting artists where they're at

emerging artists

galvanise

leverage

consolidate practice

collaborative socially engaged art

mid-career opportunity

relevant

responsive

stages of professional development

distinct discipline

code breaking language

primary motivations

funding ladders



03

[HOW DO WE SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND SOCIETY?]

As the national developmental agency for collaborative arts we are committed to understanding the political and economic context that we are operating within and the vital role of art in society. We greatly value the meaningful role of art in the life of neighbourhoods and communities. Underlining that commitment, we have created a panel of people whose practice might be exemplary or aspirational for reasons of social inclusion, genuine engagement and collaboration.

SOCIAL PRACTICE AS FIELD AND ECOLOGY

As the national developmental agency, we are committed to developing the field of collaborative socially engaged art practice. As such we see the Artist Mentoring Award as a way of giving back and supporting that ecosystem, fortifying it and making new creative ecologies.

As an organisation, we strive to listen to the field. Therefore, we place great value on the experience and perspectives of both mentors and mentees. In our commitment to making practice better, we aspire to provide optimal conditions for best practice, to be shared and put into practice.

We are committed to deepening the pool of people engaging in collaborative socially engaged art practice. In that regard, the Artist Mentoring Award programme is an opportunity for deepening our understanding of its ecology, methodology and ecosystems.

The programme is an essential component for supporting the field of practice in collaborative socially engaged collaborative art through knowledge and skill sharing. It's an informal but structured platform for knowledge exchange.

KEYWORDS

[art and society]

national development agency

political context / art / society

economic context / neighbourhoods

communities / exemplary / field

aspirational / social inclusion

genuine engagement / ecosystem

collaboration / fortifying

socially engaged art practice

giving back / mentor perspectives

new creative ecologies / pool

experience / mentee perspectives

optimal conditions / ecology

best practice / methodology

ecosystems / knowledge sharing

skill sharing / informal

platform / exchange

An aerial photograph of a river delta, likely the Okavango Delta, showing a complex network of channels and wetlands. The water is a vibrant blue, contrasting sharply with the surrounding orange-brown, textured landscape of dry earth and vegetation. The channels meander and branch out across the terrain, creating a web-like pattern.

04

[OUR PROGRAMME ETHOS]

We strive to be responsive and flexible. We value listening and giving the process time to emerge and find its own shape. Along with that flexibility we foster an ethos of care, compassion, empathy, patience and openness.

RESPECT AND MUTUALITY

We believe in a collaborative relation between mentor and mentee based on respect and mutual exchange. Such reciprocity, respect and mutuality can sustain and enrich the mentoring process.

HONESTY

We value an ethos of honesty, reflecting and interrogating all aspects of the programme. Those values of honesty, mutual respect, safe spaces and care for the mentees and the mentors are all about creating a self-reflective space to hear and enact change. We are committed to a culture of openness, reflection and sometimes discomfort within an ethics of care and understanding of difference.

SAFE, SUPPORTIVE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Our programme greatly values the creation of safe, supportive and confidential relations of trust between mentor and mentee. It is a relationship where the artist can be honest about where they are in their practice. It's a space they can lean into AND open up new understandings of their practice.

A PERSON-FOCUSED EMPHASIS

The Artist Mentoring Award is committed to a person-focused, artist-centered approach. The emphasis is on mentee-led engagement drawing on lived experience.

DIALOGICAL / ANALYTIC APPROACH

Mentoring is a dialogue, a space for the conversational unfolding practice. It's a place to troubleshoot what you're doing and holistically look at your practice. When we say conversational, we don't mean chatting: it's more like a form of rigorous, analytical discussion and dialogue.

PEER NETWORKS

We believe strongly in developing the capacity for collaborative socially engaged work through supporting and nurturing peer networks. The importance of building peer support networks for sharing pitfalls and challenges in collaborative socially engaged work cannot be underestimated. Our programme is a form of network building. It's a great opportunity for the artist to unlearn, to think critically about their practice, to talk and be heard and to form friendships and professional networks.

SUPPORTING RISK-TAKING AND CHANGE MAKING

We are committed to supporting artists in making changes, encouraging risk when the mentee is ready. We support artists to make small changes in thinking about their practice without pushing. Identifying those challenges in response to the artists practice and personality are a key aspect of the mentoring process.

CONCERNING TIME

Mentoring is not indefinite. We have found that the ability to manage time effectively in the mentoring process is a valuable capacity. It requires commitment: full and meaningful engagement in a process where the artists' time is valued too.

KEYWORDS

[programme ethos]

responsive

flexible

listening

process

time to emerge

shape

care

compassion

empathy

patience

openness

respect

mutual exchange

reciprocity

mutuality

honesty

troubleshooting

mentee-led

wholistic

rigorous

analytical

dialogue

talk

change

reflection

discomfort

person-focused

artist-centered

lived experience

risk-taking

change making
small changes
without pushing
managing time be heard
safe spaces
self-reflective space
understanding of difference
supportive space
new understandings of practice
conversational unfolding
form friendships
form professional networks
identifying challenges
finite programme
meaningful engagement

[WHERE DO WE STAND ON ACCESS, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION?]

We are totally committed to making mentoring support accessible. We want to reduce barriers to accessing skills and experience. We want fluid access to guides, critical friends, a community of peers and other professional outlets and Create networks. We are committed to identifying participant mentees using fair and inclusive measures.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We are committed to fostering inclusion and diversity and the ongoing diversification of the scheme. Such a commitment is based on principles of equity, the inclusion of minorities and the understanding of differences.

SECURING ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE

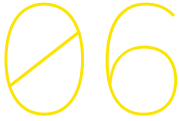
As well as supporting artists in the development of their practice, we're committed to finding ways for them to get access to the archives of practice where they may discover other ways of doing things. As such, we are committed to building a living archive of practices and networks documenting the roots of socially engaged art practice and mentoring.

KEYWORDS

[WHO IS THIS PROGRAMME FOR?]

access
reducing barriers
accessing skills
accessing experience
guides
critical friends
community of peers
professional outlets
Create networks
fair
inclusive
fostering inclusion
principles of equity
inclusion of minorities
understanding of differences
access to the archives
ways of doing
building a living archive
practices
networks
roots of socially engaged art





[CREATE AND SELF-REFLEXIVITY]

As an organisation, Create is committed to self-reflexivity and clarity of purpose. We believe in questioning ourselves: you could say we're not happy yet (but happy to be not happy). As such we're committed to reflecting on and improving our own frameworks and programmes. We insist on resourcing mentorship appropriately and on achieving clarity of expectations for us and for the mentees.

We value our own agility and being responsive to the needs of the programme as it evolves. Year on year we embed ways of capturing the learning, identifying deficits and addressing gaps. We adapt and build on those observations, moving towards new learnings and approaches for artists, for Create and for the field of practice. We're committed to our own reflective methodology, responding year on year to feedback and improving delivery of the award.

We're also committed to identifying mentors and mentees in a fair and transparent way, setting out criteria and application processes in clear, uncomplicated terms.

(SELF) CRITICALITY AND PEDAGOGY

As the Artist Mentoring Award programme develops, we are fully committed to critical reflection. We greatly value this process of critical, self-reflexivity as an opportunity to re-think the programme, to explore new territory between its known and unknown possibilities.

Within that criticality we value a certain pedagogical approach to mentoring, one that opens doors to artists whose values and ways of being in the world may align with the practice but who may not even be aware of how collaborative socially engaged art is a distinct and valued way of working. It's a pedagogy that values unlearning as much as learning.

Eschewing any universal narrative, social practice is not about flattening the complexity of what it means to work with people in place. Instead, it validates and tries to sit with the discomfort of not knowing as the artist moves from situation to situation. Through sharing skills and ways of working we nurture modes of learning together, mutual support and deep listening.

MENTOR SUPPORT: A MENTOR PANEL

While the Artist Mentoring Award supports artists in their practice, it is also a support framework for mentors, where needs can be identified and attended to. We're committed to the development and broadening of those mentor supports in a sustainable way.

Our aim is to build a pool of valued mentors, with diverse practices. We want to amplify the mentoring programme. We are committed to elevating the level of practice by carving out a blueprint for best practice that is properly resourced. As part of this process, we will establish clear boundaries for mentor / mentee relationships and frameworks that can acknowledge and support informal mentoring structures.

It goes without saying: we value collaboration. Drawing on the professional experience of collaborative artists and their artistic ambition and accomplishments in collaborative socially engaged arts practice, a focus will be maintained on collaboration and its multiple modes of engagement.

MATCH-MAKING

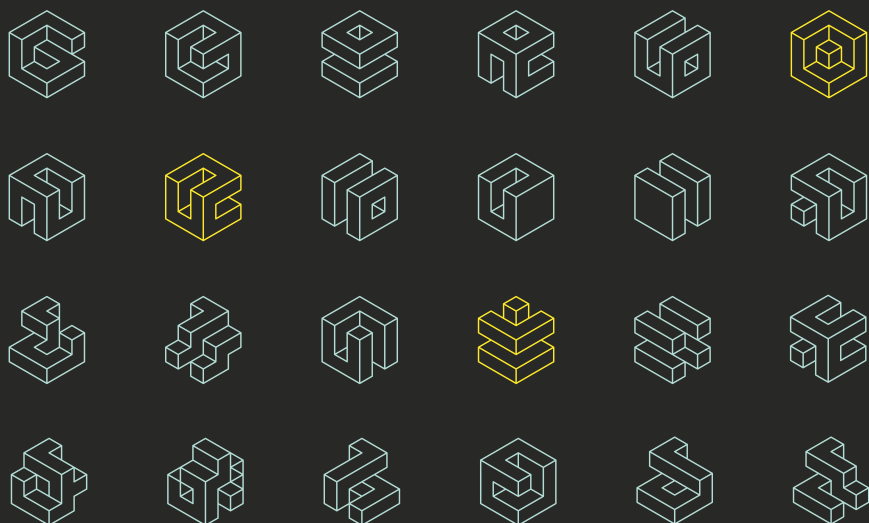
In the Artist Mentoring Award programme we give careful consideration to finding the best mentor / mentee match. Rather than focusing on artistic outcomes, the emphasis is on good pairings. We endeavour to align the questions, preoccupations and issues identified by the mentee with the experience, knowledge and situated practice of the mentor. In short, this matching of the profiles of mentee and mentor aims to make the best fit between the preoccupations of the mentee and the experience of the mentor.

KEYWORDS

[CREATE AND SELF-REFLEXIVITY]

self-reflexivity / clarity of purpose
reflecting / improving / resourcing
clarity of expectations / agility
being responsive / capturing the learning
identifying deficits / addressing gaps
building on observations / new learnings
reflective methodology / feedback
fair / transparent / criteria
uncomplicated terms / critical reflection
re-thinking / new territory
known possibilities / unknown possibilities
pedagogical approach / unlearning
learning / universal narrative
flattening complexity / people in place
discomfort / not knowing

situation to situation / sharing skills
mutual support / deep listening
ways of working / modes of learning
collaboration / pool of valued mentors
amplifying the programme / frameworks
elevating the level of practice
blueprint for best practice
clear boundaries / situated practice
informal mentoring structures
professional experience / artistic ambition
accomplishments / socially engaged arts
multiple modes of engagement
mentor-mentee match / good pairings
questions / preoccupations / issues
identified / experience / knowledge



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