

# Pollen Studios and Gallery

## Trustees Annual Report

### 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023

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#### Charity Details

**Charity Name:** Pollen Studios and Gallery (also known as Pollen Studios and as Pollen)

**Address:** 7 North Street, First Floor, Belfast, BT1 1NH

**Northern Ireland Charity Number (NIC):** 100099

#### Trustees and membership

##### **Charity Trustees (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023)**

Brian Connolly  
Zara Lyness (Associate Member)  
Ray Cashell  
Jayne Cherry  
Lenka Davidikova

##### **Pollen Studio Members 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023**

Aisling Magee (Chair)  
Aimee Magee (Treasurer)  
Stephen Gillanders (Secretary)  
Grace Fairly March 2022 to Jan 2023  
Jose Varandas July 2021 – Jan 2023  
Nichola Irvine March 2022 – Feb 2023  
Jonah Gallagher May 2022 – Jan 2023  
Paeder Stephen Fagerson Nov 2022 - present  
Conor McGinley April 2023 – present  
Emmanuela Mae Agrini – May 2023 - present

## Charity Constitution

The Pollen Studios and Gallery Constitution is laid out in a 13-page document dated **December 2013**, reviewed as required and administered by the Management Committee. Full membership of the organisation is open to individuals aged 18 years and over whose application are accepted by the committee. Such members are called Full Members and are entitled to vote at Association meetings. Persons who, in the opinion of the committee, have special knowledge or experience to offer the Association can be called Associate Members and will not have the right to vote at meetings.

The Management Committee meets not less than 2 times per year and consists of not less than 3 and not more than 7 people elected at an Annual General Meeting. Committee members may hold office for up to 3 years. On retirement members are eligible for re-nomination.

The Charity Constitution clearly contains information under the following headings; Administration, Objects, Membership, Termination of Membership, Management Committee, Disqualification and Removal of the Management Committee, Functions of the Committee, Chairing Meetings, Finance, Trust Property, Annual General Meeting, Special General Meeting, Notice, Adjournments, Rules of Procedure at all Meetings, Standing Orders/Rules, Dissolution and Indemnity and Insurance.

Full details of the constitution are available on request.

There is no other organisation or individual with the power to appoint charity trustees, such as another charity or government department.

## Summary description of Charity Purpose

The purposes of the charity are:

- To advance the education of the public in all aspects of art including; Performance Art, Sculpture and Installation, drawing and painting.
- The development of public appreciation of art by the provision of a gallery and the presentation of public performance and exhibitions.
- To further the social and cultural welfare of the community of Town Parks Belfast and Beyond.

The vision that shapes our annual activities remains the promotion and fostering of knowledge and the appreciation of the arts by the provision of facilities for the education and recreation of the public in the field of art. The charity also has the general aim of contributing to the quality of life of the people of Belfast by expanding their horizons through the provision of exciting, challenging and accessible professional and community art events. Pollen Studios and Gallery also promote and improve art and the production of objects and works of artistic merit for the public benefit by the establishment and maintenance of affordable studio space for fine artists and makers (including painters, illustrators, sculptors, photographers, printmakers, textile and other multi-media designers) upon terms appropriate to their means.

## Charity Activities

### Main Activities to further purposes for public benefit

The strategies employed to achieve the charities aims and objectives are:

- To present a broad range of art exhibitions and performance happenings for the enjoyment and education of our local community
- Offer opportunities for a broad range of people to get involved in arts activity, exploring their own creative powers
- Provide facilities for the public, professional artists and community groups to develop artistic practice
- Concentrate on involving young people in the arts to promote a culture in which different age ranges play a complementary part
- Celebrate the diversity of cultures in our society by programming presentations by, and with artists of different cultural backgrounds.

Members of the charity invigilate all openings, talks or workshops and encourage feedback, verbal and written, at all events. Feedback is discussed and recorded in minutes at our regular meetings. Minutes and action points are recorded and available to all members, with follow up and reviews at consecutive meetings until any issues are resolved. The membership takes the views of our audience very seriously and without compromising the integrity of the programme, we seek to respect the diverse ethnic, faith, sexual orientation and lifestyles of our community and audience.

Pollen Studios and Gallery encourage and welcome exhibition and performance proposals.

### Main Achievements of the year

Programme of Late Night Art Belfast and other events 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023

Date	Event
May 2022	Meet Our Members: Exhibition and Open Studio Late Night Art event
July 2022	Keeping it Zesty: Illustration Graduates from University of Ulster group show curated by Lemon Juice Studios (Illustration group)
August 2022	Graduate Award: Emily Jane Scott Solo Show, Pixel Purity
August 2022	ArtsFest: ACNI funded community project, group show and artist meet-up sessions, partnering with Arts for ALL
October 2022	Spooky Studio Stalls: Halloween themed Local Artist market
November 2022	Pollen Christmas Market: Christmas themed Local Artist market
December 2022	XMAS Market: Christmas themed Local Artist market
February 2023	This Earth is Alien to Me: Aoibhin Maguire painting Solo Show
February 2023	Aoibhin Maguire community workshop: Creating our own meditative journal
March 2023	Pollin8: ACNI funded arts-science research project exhibition opening Late Night Art event
March 2023	Pollinator Felting and Wildflower Seed Bombs: Community workshop open day, part of Pollin8 project

### Description of Events 2022/23

To celebrate the influx of new Pollen Studio members, in May 2022 we held Meet Our Members: Exhibition and Open Studio Late Night Art event, inviting the local community to meet our newest

artists and see some great work in progress. The event gave our new emerging artists greater visibility in the Belfast art scene and created networking opportunities for members of the arts community.

Two new members Grace and Nic formed their own collective “Lemon Juice Studio” which curated an exhibition of University of Ulster Belfast’s Illustration course in our gallery space, the first ever of its kind in Belfast. This allowed recent graduates opportunities for networking, learning of displaying their work as part of a group show public facing arts exhibition also giving them technical arts installation skills and getting feedback on their works from the local community.

Our annual graduate awardee Emily Jane Scott held a Solo Show, Pixel Purity in August 2022, comprising of audience interactive pieces and games and a large-scale natural soil and video projection installation which totally transformed our gallery space, which was also blacked out for the event. The show was an artistic feat in Belfast’s contemporary art scene and garnered much attention and positive feedback from visitors.

August 2022 also saw the culmination of ACNI supported project ArtsFest, through which we fostered new relationships between creatives in Belfast and further afield, via a series of artist meet- ups held in our gallery, where we skill shared application, artist statement and cv writing techniques along with knowledge of upcoming art events and creative opportunities. We also held a social artist meet up in the Sunflower bar and casual walking groups at Late Night Art Belfast events. Our exhibition held in Arts for All on 18/08/2022 showcased the work of 83 visual artists across the venue’s front and back rooms, 6 poets at a scheduled reading session on the night and had a local dj perform. The event further strengthened our relationship with Arts for All as a partner organisation to this project, and resulted in a further 2 artists gaining volunteering and 2 artists gaining regular paid work with the organisation, in the form of workshop facilitation.

In October 2022 we experimented by holding our first ever art market, providing a platform for local artists to exhibit and sell their work. We supported 15 local artists in the promotion, marketing and sale of their work across our premises which saw a great turnout, each artist made a profit and Pollen also benefitted from donations.

November and December saw the continuation of our local art markets, festively themed and offering some joy and comfort in the winter months to the local community, with music, engaging games and crafts on offer alongside artisanal stalls. The two markets supported a further 25 local artists.

The new year was rung in with a solo show of surrealist painting in February 2023 from Aoibhin Maguire “This Earth is Alien to Me” whom we connected with earlier in the year via her involvement in ArtsFest. The exhibition opened as a Late Night Art event with drop in workshops facilitated by Maguire over the following weekend where participants were encouraged to partake in mindful journalling and artwork creation in a meditative, contemplative space.

In March 2023 our project Pollin8 engaged audiences through fine art and science communication, exploring the ecological systems underpinning current wild native and domestic pollinator conservation. The exhibition we showcased as part of Late Night Art Belfast 02/03/2023 was informed by a blend of desk and field work, along with a series of interviews carried out with local beekeepers, pollinator researchers and policy makers, in particular members of the Ulster Beekeepers Association (UBKA) and Dr. Una Fitzpatrick, a founder of the current All Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP). The work created for the show comprised of delicate illustration, echoing delicate pollination services, sculptural large scale native and domesticated pollinators made from natural, eco-friendly and reclaimed materials and a digital collage of research-based film. Our large scale felt landscapes piece “Harbingers” explored common threats facing wild pollinators discovered during our research of

climate change, habitat loss and pesticides, to raise awareness of these to audiences. Our sculptural wall piece “Polarotica” explored how pollinators view manmade landscapes and fluorescent light at night. Through our research and artistic experimentation, we encountered the opportunity to create narrative and story tell of threats facing pollinators in N.I., via the day in the life of a new queen bee, using our felted large scale Carder Bee and Saturnidae moth sculptures as puppets, and felt landscapes as background, and included test shots of this in our exhibition film. This has fuelled our ambitions for future work as an organisation, opening up avenues for further artworks and collaborations with artists within and external to the organisation, cross-sectorially with academic and scientific researchers and local communities. We engaged with members of the local community via an open day of creative workshops in our gallery, where artist facilitators skill shared natural wet felting and illustration techniques along with scientific, ecological information about our native landscapes and demonstrated how to create native Irish wildflower seed bombs to participants.

## **Achievements and Performance**

Our new tenancy with Flax Artist Studios at 7 North Street has held many great events within the year, but the space comes with its challenges in terms of size and being fit for purpose. We have two rooms which studio artists have had to adapt to and navigate moving around to facilitate exhibitions, events and for studio use in specific artwork creations to maximise the capacity of the small space we currently have. Having set separate studio and gallery spaces would bolster the amount and quality of our provision of a regular community engagement and the individual development of our studio artists and their practices.

The building itself outside of our rental domain is in a state of disrepair, with landlords reluctant to make any long-lasting improvements due to the area being earmarked for redevelopment at a currently unknown date.

We are still existing within a state of precarity at the address, with no contract longer than 9 months being offered, we currently hold our lease until 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The time scale allows us some capacity for programming and planning, but only on short-term basis. Only possessing a contract for premise which is less than a full year’s tenancy has hindered our fundraising capacity, limiting the number of grants we can apply for where a minimum 1-year tenancy agreement is mandatory for eligibility for e.g. ACNI Annual Funding, Paul Hamlyn Foundation sponsorship.

Pollen was successful in being awarded an Arts Council Northern Ireland Organisational Small Grant which facilitated our community projects ArtsFest and Pollin8, short evaluations below -

### **Pollin8**

We have been very pleased with how we delivered our ArtScience project in a blended format with fine art pieces, researched narrative and immersive experience show and science based artistic workshops. As we received approx. 2/3 of our original funding request, some elements of our original project had to be altered and some omitted altogether. However, our goal of creating an information-driven engaging event was still accomplished and the installation pieces that were created were to a very high standard and the artists are very proud of their work. As our research progressed, it informed the science behind our show and led us in certain directions, via connections made and different topics and issues that came up as a result of the interviews we conducted. For example, it led us to attend the Ulster Beekeepers Association Annual Conference where we filmed some talks and interviewed speakers for our documentary. The research process was a particular highlight for the project managers, and we are endeavouring to continue these lines of investigation in future work.

## ArtsFest

In addition, the development of the artists event ArtsFest was seen as a big success. The artist development sessions were met with good feedback and young artists were given the opportunity to exhibit work at a large, curated show. More than 50 artists were able to exhibit work ranging from paintings and sculptures to music and poetry readings. The event held in Arts For All was attended by over 500 people on the opening night and approx 350 people during the following weeks. The event occurred during summer months when art openings and shows are usually less common. As many participants were young students and graduates, having the event out of term- time was very helpful to a lot of people.

We promoted these events and the work of the artists involved via the Pollen social media channels, Community Arts Partnership and Visual Artist Ireland websites, long with posters and flyers in the local area. We have been overwhelmed by the positive feedback we've received regarding both of these projects and are excited for the future continuation, growth and development of both and Pollen as an organisation. We give ACNI a huge thank you for making this possible.

In addition to these projects the new art market offerings from our organisation has been hugely welcomed by the local community and artists. We will continue to experiment and push creative boundaries in our arts events and fundraising efforts.

An ambitious collective of individuals, we are now continuing to seek a more suitable premises for our work and funding to grow and develop as an organisation connecting with communities.

## Public Benefit Statutory Statement

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's Guidance on public benefit and we will endeavour to encourage all within our community to take part in our activities and to attend our exhibitions when it is safe to do so under guidance from Stormont. We also openly encourage the local community, local schools and higher education colleges to visit the gallery space to enjoy and learn from the art we provide or host.

## End of Year Financial Review

Pollen Studios and Gallery do not hold any funds as a custodian trustee.

Pollen Studios and Gallery end of year accounts show the charity account to be in credit. Pollen Studios and Gallery has been funded primarily by studio members artists for the financial year 2022/23

## Deficit details

There are no funds held by the charity that are materially in deficit at the end of the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

Trustee

*Amel Oaish*

Date.....30/01/2023.....

Trustee

*Jayna Chemsy*

Date.....30/01/2023.....