

Pollen Studios and Gallery

Trustees Annual Report

1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

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Pollen Studios and Gallery Trustees Annual Report 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

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 (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024)

Jayne Cherry
Alice Clarke
Ray Cashell

Pollen Studio Members 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Aisling Magee (Chair)
Aimee Magee (Treasurer)
Stephen Gillanders (Secretary) – June 2023
Paeder Stephen Fagan Nov 2022 – Nov 2024
Conor McGinley April 2023 – present
Emmanuela Mae Agrini – May 2023 – present
Charlotte Dixon (Secretary) - June 2023 -Nov 2024

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 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Date	Event
April 2023	Indigo Azidahaka's first solo show: The Second Coming of Auntie Lynne
June 2023	Summer Late Night Art Market for local artists
October 2023	Charlotte Dixon – Solo Show: Put Together – audience participation performance and exhibition
October 2023	Halloween Late Night Art Market for local artists
Oct 2023 – March 2024 ongoing	ACNI Funded Rural Engagement Programme: PSG & Mayobridge Youth Club – creative workshops for young people delivered by our members
November 2023	Pollen Member Group Show exhibition
November 2023	Late Night Art Market for local Artists
December 2024	XMAS Market: Christmas themed Local Artist market
December 2024	Postcard Exhibition: Open Call to local artists to display and sell their work in our gallery space
February 2024	Lindsay Mead Solo Show: Repossession – photography and audio/visual installation
February 2024	Valentines' Late Night Art Market for local Artists
March 2024	Conor McGinley Solo Show: Sub Space – performance and painting installation
March 2024	Late Night Art Market for local artists

Description of Events 2023/24

April 2023: Indigo Azidahaka's First Solo Show – *The Second Coming of Auntie Lynne*

In April 2023, Indigo Azidahaka debuted their first solo show, *The Second Coming of Auntie Lynne*. This immersive exhibition captivated audiences with a bold and unapologetic exploration of identity, mythology, and personal narrative. Indigo transformed the gallery into a surreal and thought-provoking space, blending sound performance, mixed media, and installation to engage visitors in an unforgettable artistic journey. The exhibition, opened as part of Late Night Art Belfast, garnered strong attendance and positive feedback, marking a promising milestone for the emerging artist.

June 2023: Summer Late Night Art Market for Local Artists

To celebrate the summer season, Pollen hosted a vibrant Late Night Art Market in June 2023, providing a platform for 10 local artists to exhibit and sell their work. The market created opportunities for artists to showcase their creative outputs while fostering connections with the local community. With an impressive turnout, the event also included live music and creative activities, making it a festive evening that was both enjoyable for visitors and successful for participating artists.

October 2023: Charlotte Dixon – Solo Show – *Put Together*

In October 2023, Charlotte Dixon presented *Put Together*, a solo exhibition and audience participation performance that challenged the boundaries between artist and viewer. Dixon's work blended installation, performance, and participatory art, inviting visitors to collaborate in creating the final outcomes of the exhibition. The engaging and interactive nature of *Put Together* sparked meaningful conversations about assembly, disassembly, and the power of collective creativity, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended.

October 2023: Halloween Late Night Art Market for Local Artists

Pollen celebrated the spooky season with a Halloween-themed Late Night Art Market in October 2023. Featuring work from 12 artists, the market highlighted eerie, whimsical, and seasonally inspired creations. Alongside artisanal stalls, the event offered themed refreshments, interactive workshops, and live performances, creating a lively atmosphere that delighted visitors of all ages while supporting the local arts community.

October 2023 – March 2024 (Ongoing): ACNI-Funded Rural Engagement Programme – PSG & Mayobridge Youth Club

Pollen's Rural Engagement Programme, funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, launched in October 2023 and continues through March 2024. This initiative focuses on delivering creative workshops for young people in collaboration with PSG and Mayobridge Youth Club. Led by Pollen's members, the programme offers opportunities for participants to explore a range of artistic techniques, develop creative skills, and engage with their local community in meaningful ways.

November 2023: Pollen Member Group Show Exhibition

November 2023 saw Pollen members come together to showcase their latest work in a group exhibition, celebrating the diverse talents of the studio community. The show featured a variety of mediums and themes, offering visitors a rich and dynamic visual experience. This collaborative event underscored the collective strength of Pollen's artists and their shared dedication to creative excellence.

November 2023: Late Night Art Market for Local Artists

Continuing the success of its art market series, Pollen hosted another Late Night Art Market in November 2023. The event provided a space for 15 local artists to display and sell their work to an engaged audience. With live music, refreshments, and a warm, inviting atmosphere, the market drew strong attendance and further strengthened connections between artists and the community.

December 2024: XMAS Market – Christmas-Themed Local Artist Market

The festive season brought cheer with Pollen's annual Christmas-themed market in December 2024. Supporting 20 local artists, the market offered handcrafted gifts, seasonal decorations, and one-of-a-kind artworks, making it the perfect destination for holiday shoppers. Accompanied by live performances, hot drinks, and engaging activities, the market became a cherished community tradition.

December 2024: Postcard Exhibition – Open Call to Local Artists

Pollen invited local artists to participate in an open-call Postcard Exhibition in December 2024. This unique event showcased small-scale works, offering an accessible entry point for both emerging and established artists to display and sell their creations. The exhibition encouraged community engagement and introduced new audiences to the local arts scene through the works of 86 local artists, many of whom benefitted from selling their work and creating new community connections.

February 2024: Lindsay Mead Solo Show – *Repossession*

In February 2024, Lindsay Mead presented *Repossession*, an evocative photography and audio/visual installation exploring themes of memory, loss, and reclamation. This immersive exhibition drew audiences into a deeply personal narrative, sparking reflection and emotional resonance. Mead's work transformed the gallery into an intimate, contemplative space, leaving a profound impact on visitors.

February 2024: Valentine's Late Night Art Market for Local Artists

To celebrate love and creativity, Pollen hosted a Valentine's-themed Late Night Art Market in February 2024. Featuring work from 15 local artists, the market offered unique, handmade gifts and art pieces perfect for the occasion. With live music, refreshments, and a romantic atmosphere, the event was a hit among visitors and artists alike.

March 2024: Conor McGinley Solo Show – *Sub Space*

March 2024 brought Conor McGinley's solo show, *Sub Space*, to Pollen's gallery. Combining performance and painting installation, McGinley's work explored themes of gender, identity, sexuality and the human experience of transitional spaces. The exhibition featured a live painting performance and immersive visuals, captivating audiences and earning praise for its originality and impact.

March 2024: Late Night Art Market for Local Artists

Concluding the 2023–2024 season of events, Pollen hosted another Late Night Art Market in March 2024. Showcasing a wide range of works from 10 local artists, the event brought together the community to celebrate and support the arts. With a lively atmosphere and strong attendance, the market reinforced Pollen's commitment to fostering local talent and creative opportunities.

Achievements and Performance

Our situation at Flax Artist Studios at 7 North Street remains unchanged, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While the space has hosted many successful events over the past year, its size and adaptability limit its potential for larger-scale exhibitions and consistent community programming. Artists have worked hard to navigate and adapt the two rooms for studio work, exhibitions, and events, but a more suitable premises with dedicated studio and gallery spaces would greatly enhance our ability to deliver quality programs and support individual artist development. Furthermore, the building outside our rental domain is in significant disrepair, with landlords reluctant to invest in improvements due to the area's potential redevelopment. This, combined with our short-term lease agreements—currently running until 24th July 2024 with no contract longer than nine months—has hindered our ability to secure funding from sources requiring a minimum one-year tenancy.

Despite these challenges, we are proud of our achievements. Pollen was awarded the Arts Council Northern Ireland Rural Engagement Programme grant for our project **"Combating Loneliness & Isolation Through Arts."** This project focused on addressing social isolation among young people through creative workshops delivered at Mayobridge Youth Club and Community Centre. Key highlights include:

- **Tailored Creative Workshops:** Activities such as painting, drawing, mask-making, street art, t-shirt printing, and costume design were carefully designed to suit various age groups (6–19 years).
- **Collaborative Community Art:** Participants worked together on murals for the Christmas concert, costumes for the Halloween parade, and a large-scale commemorative felted artwork celebrating the centre's 60th anniversary.
- **Social Inclusion:** Workshops created a welcoming environment for participants to connect with peers and youth group leaders, fostering new friendships (75% of participants reported making new friends) and a sense of community.
- **Skill Development:** 94% of participants reported learning new artistic skills, and many expressed an eagerness to continue exploring creative activities in the future.
- **Enhanced Wellbeing:** The project boosted participants' confidence in their artistic abilities (69% felt more confident), pride in their work (92% were proud), and overall enjoyment (81% had a great time). These outcomes contributed to improved mental health and reduced feelings of loneliness.

The success of this project underscores the importance of accessible arts programming in rural communities and demonstrates Pollen's commitment to fostering creativity, social inclusion, and community connections. Moving forward, we are actively seeking a more suitable premises to expand our offerings, improve our capacity for long-term planning, and continue delivering impactful community and arts initiatives.

We have also continued to host local artists in markets during Late Night Art Belfast, providing them with a valuable platform to showcase and sell their work directly to a diverse audience. This has enhanced their visibility within the local arts community, introduced their practice to new supporters, and created opportunities for meaningful networking with peers, collectors, and art enthusiasts. In addition, we have hosted solo exhibitions for external artists, offering them a professional platform to present their work, reach new audiences, and engage with Belfast's thriving

arts community, helping to elevate their profiles and foster connections within the local and national art scene. By doing so, we have supported their creative careers while contributing to the vibrant cultural fabric of Belfast.

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 2023/24

Deficit details

There are no funds held by the charity that are materially in deficit at the end of the financial year 31st March 2024.

Signed by The Trustees -



26th January 2025



Date 26/01/2025