

STUDIOS + GALLERY

Annual Report

2023-24



Who we are:

Founded in 1984, **Queen Street Studios (QSS)** is the longest-running studio group in Northern Ireland. Supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and Belfast City Council (BCC), we promote artistic excellence and creative innovation by offering high-quality, affordable studios and a year-round gallery programme. Through our work, we aim to retain and nurture local talent, highlight Belfast as a cultural hub, and build connections with the wider community.

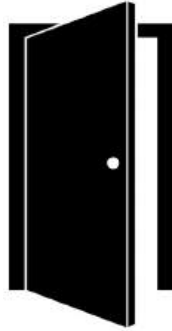


Studio 43 – Kate O'Neill, photo by Tim Millen



Studio 44 – Sharon Kelly, photo by Tim Millen

Our studios:



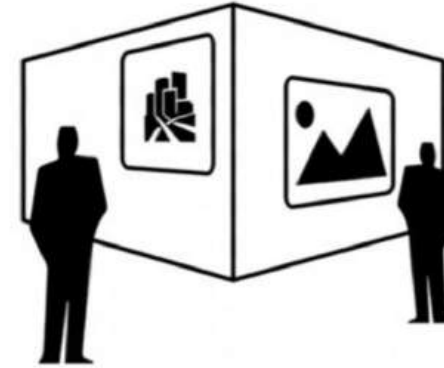
47 self-contained spaces for rent

1 bursary studio (awarded to **Mollie Browne** in 2023/24)

53 artists (51 studio holders + 2 associates)

99% studio occupancy rate

Our artistic programme:



20 exhibitions

151 exhibiting artists (QSS artists counted once across multiple shows)

38 artwork sales

2 performances

3 artist talks

1,977 visitors

1 mentoring programme (continued into 2024/25)

1 portfolio preparation programme (delivered over 3 days)



im/material monument, solo show by QSS artist Gail Ritchie, Gallery 2



The Space Between, QSS artists Charlie Scott & Karl Hagan, Gallery 1

Mollie Browne (2023/24 bursary recipient), Emergence BA graduate show, Gallery 1





A mental illness on canvas, Clinton Kirkpatrick, Gallery 2

Aims:

During 2023-24, QSS aimed to:

- Provide secure and affordable studios for professional artists at all career stages.
- Foster a community ethos amongst artists through mentoring, collaboration and practical support.
- Create opportunities for wider public engagement in the arts.
- Ensure long-term organisational stability.

Objectives:

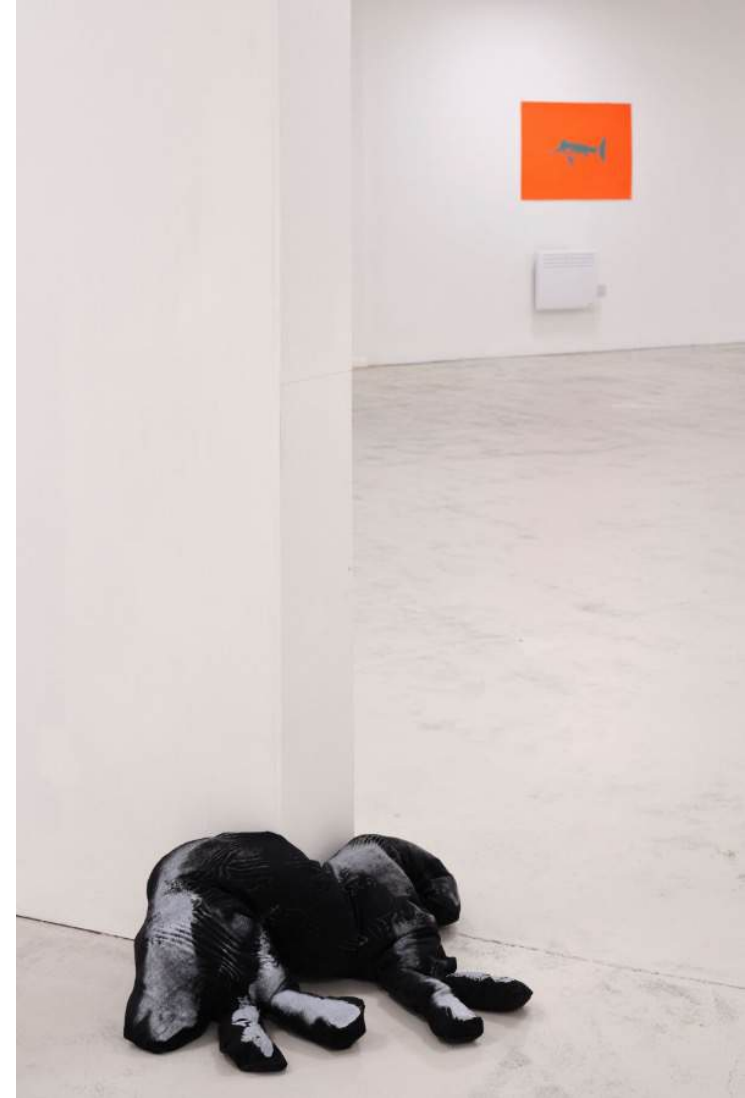
To achieve these aims, QSS sought to:

- Support our tenant base in a well-maintained building.
- Stay true to our 'affordable' ethos by subsidising studio rent.
- Support transition from education to professional practice through bursaries/ring-fenced exhibitions.

- Establish a 'Membership Sub-committee' and hold regular member meetings/events to develop a collective identity.
- Support our artists via exhibition, curatorial and development opportunities.
- Improve the living/working conditions of artists by paying artists fees for event delivery.
- Strengthen public engagement through a year-round programme of artistic activities.
- Engage more effectively with digital audiences by enhancing content and exploring new technologies.
- Foster and strengthen partnerships that contribute to the NI arts sector.
- Provide regular training for Board members and align duties with objectives.
- Continue to refine corporate governance.
- Transition to a hybrid funding model.
- Diversify revenue streams via strategic planning.
- Plan effectively for future relocations.

Structure, governance and management:

Queen Street Studios was founded in 1984 and reconstituted in 1994 as a company limited by guarantee, defined by the Companies Act 2006. The organisation is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and managed by a voluntary Board of Directors with support from two part-time employees (Membership & Development Officer and Board Secretary) and a freelance digital media consultant.



Kathryn Graham solo show, Gallery 2

Directors and organisational structure

The QSS Board meets every six weeks and includes four studio artists and four external members with expertise in management, law, and finance. We use Arts & Business NI's Board Match Programme for recruiting non-member trustees, and artists can nominate studio members to the board. This governance structure ensures that QSS remains artist-led while benefiting from diverse professional insights and experiences.

The QSS Membership & Development Officer (Cathy Scullion) and Board Secretary (Irene Fitzgerald) have delegated responsibility for the day-to-day running of the studios and gallery in accordance with the instructions issued by the Board.

The Membership & Development Officer works four days per week and reports to the Board Secretary weekly. The Board Secretary works one day per week and reports to the Chair on a weekly basis. Both staff members report to the full Board at each meeting. Lastly, the freelance digital media consultant works ten hours per week and reports to the Membership & Development Officer on a weekly basis.

QSS Board Members

Reuben Brown

Aisling Byrne

Majella Clancy

Amanda Coogan

James Fair

Joy Gerrard

Heather Moorhead

Fiona Rogan

Principal risks & uncertainties & risk management

The QSS trustees monitor and evaluate risks and ensure systems and controls are subject to regular review. The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those relating to the operations and finances of the charity, and have put in place a risk management plan to manage any exposure to those risks. The key risks set out in the organisation's risk register are detailed below:

- Arts sector funding is constantly under threat. As with similar organisations, there is a risk from an over-reliance on annual funding rounds and that funding in future years may be reduced.
- The board recognises the risks associated with this and are committed to building reserves and increasing operating sustainability, enabling the organisation to continue to make its valuable contribution to the Arts and the wider community.
- The charity requires suitable premises to be able to support artists in their practice, and is restricted to short-term leases by the nature of short term funding. The charity has a lease on suitable premises until 31 March 2025. Following this date, the organisation will move to a one-year rolling contract with 6 months notice to quit. There is a risk that should notice to vacate be given suitable, affordable premises could be difficult to secure.

Achievements & performance

Between April 2023 and March 2024 QSS provided 47 self-contained studios to rent in East Belfast (accommodating 49 artists). Support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) ensured these studios remained affordable in relation to artists' means. Additionally, we provided a bursary space for a Belfast School of Art graduate (awarded to Mollie Browne), supporting the transition from education to professional practice.

Funding from Belfast City Council supported strategic planning, the appointment of a Digital Media Officer, a short-term increase in staffing hours and the establishment of a mentoring programme (benefitting eight early career artists), while investment from the Esme Mitchell Trust and Enkalon Foundation (together with a percentage of QSS turnover) enabled the delivery of 20 exhibitions across our two gallery spaces.

These shows included (i) eight solo exhibitions (by QSS artists Naomi Litvack, Sinead McKeever, Tim Millen and Gail Ritchie together with external artists Elize de Beers, Kathryn Graham, Clinton Kirkpatrick and Nollaig Molloy); (ii) four two-person exhibitions (Karl Hagan/Charlie Scott and Reuben Brown/Darcy Patterson from QSS, Kate O'Neill (QSS)/Claudia McClelland and Vasiliki Stasinaki (QSS)/Sarah Gordon); and (iii) eight group exhibitions (HND students from Belfast MET, MFA Year 1 students and graduating 2023 BA students from the Belfast School of Art, QSS new members show and Christmas Showcase, neighbouring studio group 'Creative Exchange' members show, 56 Group Wales/At Cross Purposes featuring work by 32 artists from across the UK and a four-person exhibition by Sinead Aldridge, Patricia Doherty, Mary Theresa Keown and Louise Wallace). Further funding via ACNI's Health & Safety Capital Programme allowed for the purchase of essential safety equipment and the upgrading of gallery lighting.



Louise Wallace, Messy Business group show,, Gallery 1



Elize de Beer solo show, Orthography in Disregard, Gallery 2

Achievements & performance continued

In June 2023 QSS piloted a **Portfolio Preparation Programme** in partnership with Ulster University, which involved six of our artists (Niamh Clarke, Alacoque Davey, Joy Gerrard, Sharon Kelly, Jane Rainey and Charlie Scott), working with 10 pupils from the Belfast Model School over three days.

The programme objectives included: (i) building young people's confidence in their abilities; (ii) aligning with UU's 'People, Place and Partnership' strategy (helping to unlock potential and enable access to higher education for students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds); and (iii) building relationships with local schools/communities, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Seven of the ten participating students went on to apply for creative subjects at third level (ranging from graphic design, screen production, fine art, film studies/production and games design).

Student feedback:

"Being able to see the studios and having an insight to how it feels and looks as well as being surrounded by art was amazing!"; "The artists dived into their life and how they experiment with things and how a lot of experiments turn into final pieces"; "I got an insight into what artists lives are like, I learnt new media and enjoyed blowing up the images and working with ink; "This course has made me want to apply to Ulster University and do textiles after my A-Levels"

Teacher feedback:

"I cannot emphasise enough the positive impact of the course with QSS. All the students have extra work within their portfolios as a result and came back inspired to look at their work in a different way. One girl told me "Miss, I have just had the best day of my life!" High praise indeed!"

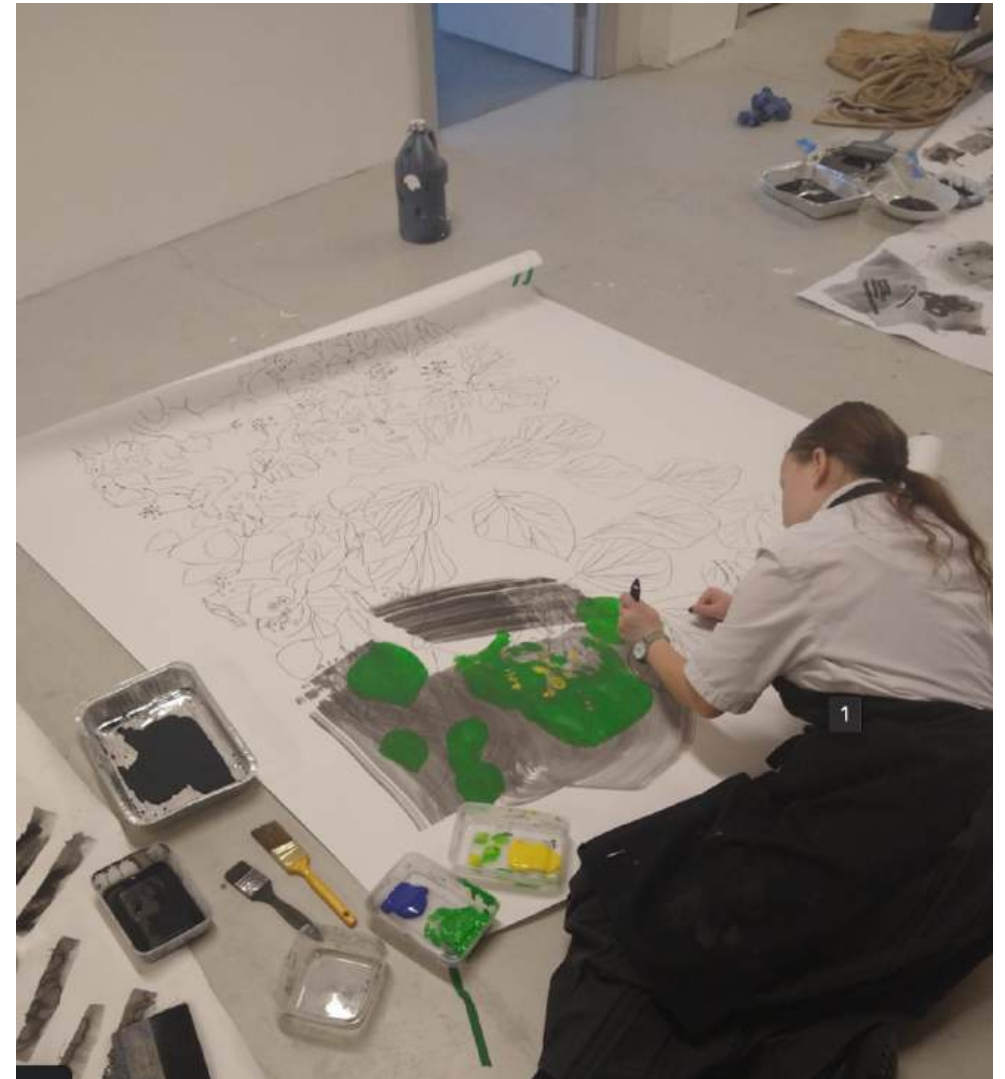
Fiona Ward, Belfast Model Girls School

Achievements & performance continued

QSS tutor feedback:

"The students worked in a relaxed and supportive space where they had the chance to explore their ideas and chat about their plans and hopes for the future. We had conversations about 3rd level art education and how to prepare for applying to Art School. The students were listened to and their ideas brought forward for discussion. We spent time with each young person, the small size of the group allowed us to build connection throughout the day. I have facilitated workshops in the past and this days teaching reminded me of the value of passing on knowledge and skills while also refining my own ways of working and communicating."

Alacoque Davey, Studio 27



Achievements & performance (QSS artists)

Beyond QSS, our artists exhibited their work locally, nationally and internationally throughout 2023-24, providing numerous opportunities for cultural engagement. Such activities included solo shows by Kwok Tsui (Deferral | Echo, CCA Derry/Derry Londonderry and Border | Sky, RHA Atrium and Foyer Galleries), Sharon Kelly (Counterpunch, Corinthians Boxing Club, Dublin), Alana Barton (Dreamers, Hang Tough Contemporary, Dublin), Yasmine Robinson (Potluck, Coups Contemporary, London), Grace McMurray (The Revolution is SOFT, Katie Lindsay Gallery, Downpatrick), Clement McAleer (retrospective exhibition, FE McWilliam Gallery, Banbridge), and Jennifer Trouton (represented Ormston House at the Supermarket Art Fair, Stockholm); and representation in a number of group exhibitions including 'The Irish Contemporaries {ii}', Los Angeles

(Alana Barton, Reuben Brown, Catherine Davison, Clare French, Ashley B. Holmes and Gail Ritchie), Boyle Arts Festival (Frederic Huska & Jennifer Trouton), 'Shelter', National Gallery of Ireland (Sharon Kelly), RA Summer Exhibition, London (Angela Hackett) and the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize, London (Joy Gerrard, Sharon Kelly & Grace McMurray). Other notable achievements included a performance of 'Ode to Joy' by Amanda Coogan and the Cork Deaf Community Choir, Cork Midsummer Arts Festival; shortlisting of The Clare French Film for the 2023 Tokyo International Short Film Festival; and; participation in residencies by Vasiliki Stasinaki (Morpho, Antwerp, Belgium) and Sharon Kelly (Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium). Moreover, 18% of QSS artists contributed to third-level arts education in Belfast.



F.E. MCWILLIAM GALLERY & STUDIO

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
requests the pleasure of your company at the opening
of the exhibition:

Clement McAleer

Selected Work, 1973-2023

Saturday 14 October 2023
3.00pm – 5.00pm

The exhibition will be opened by Anne Stewart, Senior
Curator of Art, National Museums Northern Ireland

The exhibition continues until 3 February 2024
Free Admission

Verso: Clement McAleer, Land Crossing 2, monotypic, 56 x 76, 2012

Gallery Opening Hours:
Monday to Saturday, 10.00 – 17.00

F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
200 Newry Road Banbridge, Co. Down BT32 3NB
T: 03840 623322 E: info@femcwilliam.com
www.femcwilliam.com



Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council



Amanda Coogan's durational performance of Marina Abramovic's 'House with the Ocean View', Royal Academy, London (2023)



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Communication and information

QSS issue regular updates to members via email and a dedicated Studio WhatsApp Group, keeping them abreast of studio news and opportunities. We promote the artistic activities of our members and the organisation's events programme through regular posts on the QSS website/social media platforms, via email to the organisation's subscribers and third-party platforms (i.e., Irish Arts Review, Visual Artists Ireland and Community Arts Partnership). Available studios and exhibition opportunities are openly advertised as they arise.



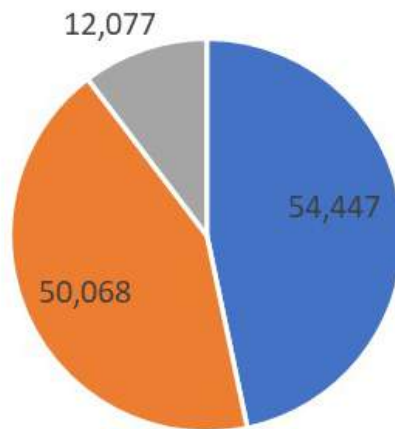
Kwok Tsui, Deferral | Echo, CCA Derry/Derry Londonderry



Sharon Kelly, residency at Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium

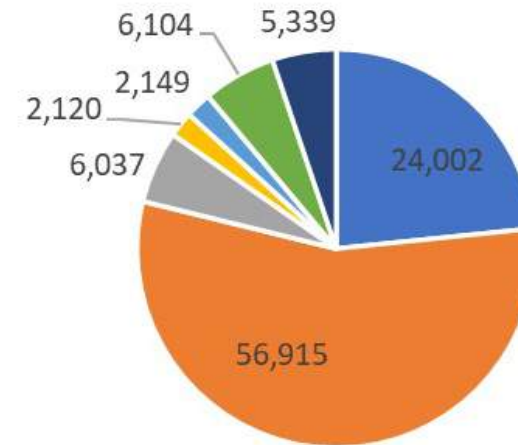
Financial snapshot

Income £116,592



■ Grants ■ Rent (studios, storage fees, venue hire) ■ Programming

Expenditure £102,666



■ Staff ■ Studios ■ Artistic Programme
■ Office ■ Accountancy ■ Depreciation
■ General expenses

Reserves policy

The QSS board has determined that free undesignated reserves, equivalent to three to six months operating expenditure, should be maintained for the benefit of the whole community in the event of an unexpected interruption of income. For the year 2023-24 this would equate to approximately £19,000 to £38,000. In an environment of short-term funding and continued pressures on financial resources for the Arts the board believe that this would provide sufficient time for the organisation to respond to specific challenges.



Gerard Carson's studio at QSS (detail), photo by Tim Millen



Majella Clancy's studio at QSS (detail), photo by Tim Millen

Administrative information

Registered address: Queen Street Studios, The Arches Centre, 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue, Belfast, BT5 5AA

Charity Commission number in Northern Ireland: NI100835

HMRC reference: X0286/94

Company number: NI028725

Accountants: Muldoon & Co Chartered Accountants, 16 Mount Charles, Belfast BT7 1NZ

Bankers: Bank of Ireland, Belfast City Branch, Belfast, BT1 2BA

T: 07495 013947

E: gallery@queenstreetstudios.net

W: queenstreetstudios.net

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