

STUDIOS + GALLERY



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

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.



Top: Alana Barton's studio

Bottom: Paddy McKeown performing at the opening of *We are QSS at 40*

Photo credit: Tim Millen

Governance, structure and management:

QSS is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and managed by a voluntary Board of Directors with support from two part-time employees and a Digital Media Consultant.

The Board meets every six to eight weeks and includes four studio artists alongside five external members with expertise in management, law, and finance. We use Arts & Business NI's Board Match Programme to recruit non-member trustees, while QSS artists can nominate studio members to the board. This model ensures QSS remains artist-led while also benefiting from diverse professional experience.

Board members who served during 2024-25: James Fair (Chair), Fiona Rogan (Secretary), Reuben Brown, Aisling Byrne, Gerard Carson, Majella Clancy, Amanda Coogan,

Joy Gerrard, Christina Johnston, Tim Millen and Heather Moorhead.

The QSS Membership & Development Officer, **Cathy Scullion**, and Board Secretary, **Irene Fitzgerald**, hold delegated responsibility for the day-to-day running of the studios and gallery in accordance with Board direction. The Membership & Development Officer works four days per week and reports weekly to the Board Secretary. The Board Secretary works one day per week and reports weekly to the Chair. Both staff members also report to the full Board at each meeting.

In October 2024 we said goodbye to Digital Media Officer Isabella Koban, and in December we welcomed **Emma Quin** to the role. Emma is an experienced Communications Officer with varied production, project management and creative experience in both corporate and arts sectors. She is Co-Director and Treasurer at Catalyst Arts Belfast and is also a practicing visual artist, writer and curator. At QSS, Emma is responsible for maintaining all digital output, from web

Governance, structure and management continued...

content to social channels, promoting our programming and the work of our members. She works ten hours per week and reports to the Membership & Development Officer on a weekly basis.

In 2024 our **Membership Sub-Committee** and **40th Birthday Sub-Committee** merged to help organise our anniversary exhibition and events programme (accountable to the QSS Board). This committee comprised Susan Connolly, Sharon Kelly, Meadhbh McIlgorm, Tim Millen, Yasmine Robinson and Vasiliki Stasinaki. A changing panel of QSS artists also supported the assessment of studio and exhibition applications. Together, these arrangements ensured that a broad range of QSS artists played an active role in shaping the organisation's artistic programme.



Emma Quin

Freelance Digital Media Officer

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.



Meadhbh McIlgorm, *[de]fragmentation* group show, (13 Mar–10 Apr 2025), Gallery 2

Photo credit: Simon Mills

Aims:

During 2024-25, QSS aimed to:

- Provide affordable studios for professional artists at all career stages.
- Support artistic career progression through mentoring, collaboration & opportunity.
- Provide a welcoming public gateway to 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.

- Facilitate regular 'Membership Committee' meetings/in-house 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.
- Communicate what we do effectively through the appointment of a Digital Media Officer.
- 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.
- Build staffing capacity.
- Plan effectively for future relocations.

QSS in numbers (2024/25):

47 self-contained spaces for rent

1 bursary studio (awarded to **Claire Ritchie** in 2024/25)

49 studio holders

98% studio occupancy rate

2 associate members

13 exhibitions

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

2 open studio events

3 peer-critique sessions

1 curator open-day

2 workshops

1 screening / music event

3 panel discussions

3 artist talks

7 guided tours

1 mentoring programme (commenced in 2023/24)



Top: Gerry Devlin, Studio 34. Photo credit: Tim Millen

Bottom: Guided tour of *We are QSS at 40* for the 'Friends of the FE McWilliam Gallery' (led by Jennifer Trouton)



'Behind the Studio Door' guided tour stops off at Gail Ritchie' studio
(tour led by Meadhbh McIlgorm)



Left: Feltmaking Workshop participants (workshop led by Anushiya Sundaralingam)

Right: Pupils from Belfast Model Girls School visit Karl Hagan's studio

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 with reduced funding) and are committed to securing multi-annual funding where available, 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 currently occupies premises which are to be redeveloped for housing. There are several other arts organisations also seeking new premises for creative workspaces and there is a risk that should notice to vacate be received suitable, affordable premises could be difficult to secure.

Achievements & performance:

Studios and artist support

Between April 2024 and March 2025, QSS provided 47 self-contained studios in East Belfast, accommodating 49 artists. ACNI and BCC support ensured studio rents remained affordable in relation to artists' means. A graduate bursary space was awarded to **Claire Ritchie** (Belfast School of Art) to support the transition from education to professional practice and eight mentees continued working with in-house artist mentors. We also facilitated three professional development workshops, led by Jane Morrow and Ciara Hickey, focusing on presenting to curators and preparing funding/exhibition applications.



Bursary recipient Claire Ritchie in her studio

Mentoring Programme feedback...

"I felt that she went above and beyond in her role as mentor, offering me painting/materials advice, insights into her own studio practice, guidance with application forms, and encouragement around how to write creatively and experimentally about my work."

Hannah Clegg (mentee), paired with Majella Clancy

"We had some really good conversations. I really valued it. I think I'm at a weird stage balancing life/career etc and honestly it was just quite cathartic to have time and space to talk about the ups and downs of having an art practice and the realities of what that looked like no matter what stage you are at - progress is not linear!"

Meadhbh McIlgorm (mentee), paired with Sharon Kelly

"Spending time with Alana in itself was great. For me it was lovely to share my experiences to date and hopefully that might help her navigate her way."

Jennifer Trouton (mentor), paired with Alana Barton

"Having a good professional relationship with Mollie as one of a new generation of artists in the QSS studios has been wonderful and aids studio camaraderie and community."

Sharon Kelly (mentor), paired with Mollie Browne

Achievements & performance:

Gallery programme

During the year, QSS delivered an ambitious and varied programme of exhibitions across both gallery spaces.

- **Bob Speers – *Thin Place* (4–25 April):** Explored intersections between earthly and spiritual realms in Irish mythology; featured on BBC NI's webpage (23 April 2024).
- **SARC Research Group – *Sound Space Environment* (4–11 April):** A Belfast Sonorities Festival showcase featuring Pedro Rebelo, Georgios Varoutsos, Lara Weaver, and Robert Coleman.
- **Belfast School of Art, MFA Year 1 – *Threshold* (9–23 May):** Group show featuring 13 artists.
- **Cré Collective – *A State of Being* (2–23 May):** Ceramics exhibition with a panel discussion on the mental health benefits of collective working (part of NI Mental Health Arts Festival).

- **Ashley Holmes – *Counting the Days* (6–27 June):** Paintings reflecting on the loss of the artist's mother.
- **Brigid Mulligan & Freebirds M.C.C Project (8 June–11 July):** Exhibition exploring grief following road traffic accidents; a motorcycle rally themed event on 8th June, featured live music from Lazarus Brother and a screening of the short film 'Freebirds', co-created with Bruno Pierucci.
- **Eimear Nic Roibeaird – *Seek the Fair Land / Tabhair Ar Ais an Oíche Aréir* (8 Aug–5 Sept):** Solo show exploring Ireland's liminal spaces.
- **Group show – *What do we want?* (8 Aug–5 Sept):** Curated by Olivier Cornet and featuring work by Jill Gibbon, Eoin Mac Lochlainn, Tom Molloy and Gail Ritchie; addressed geopolitical instability through history, memory, and imagination.



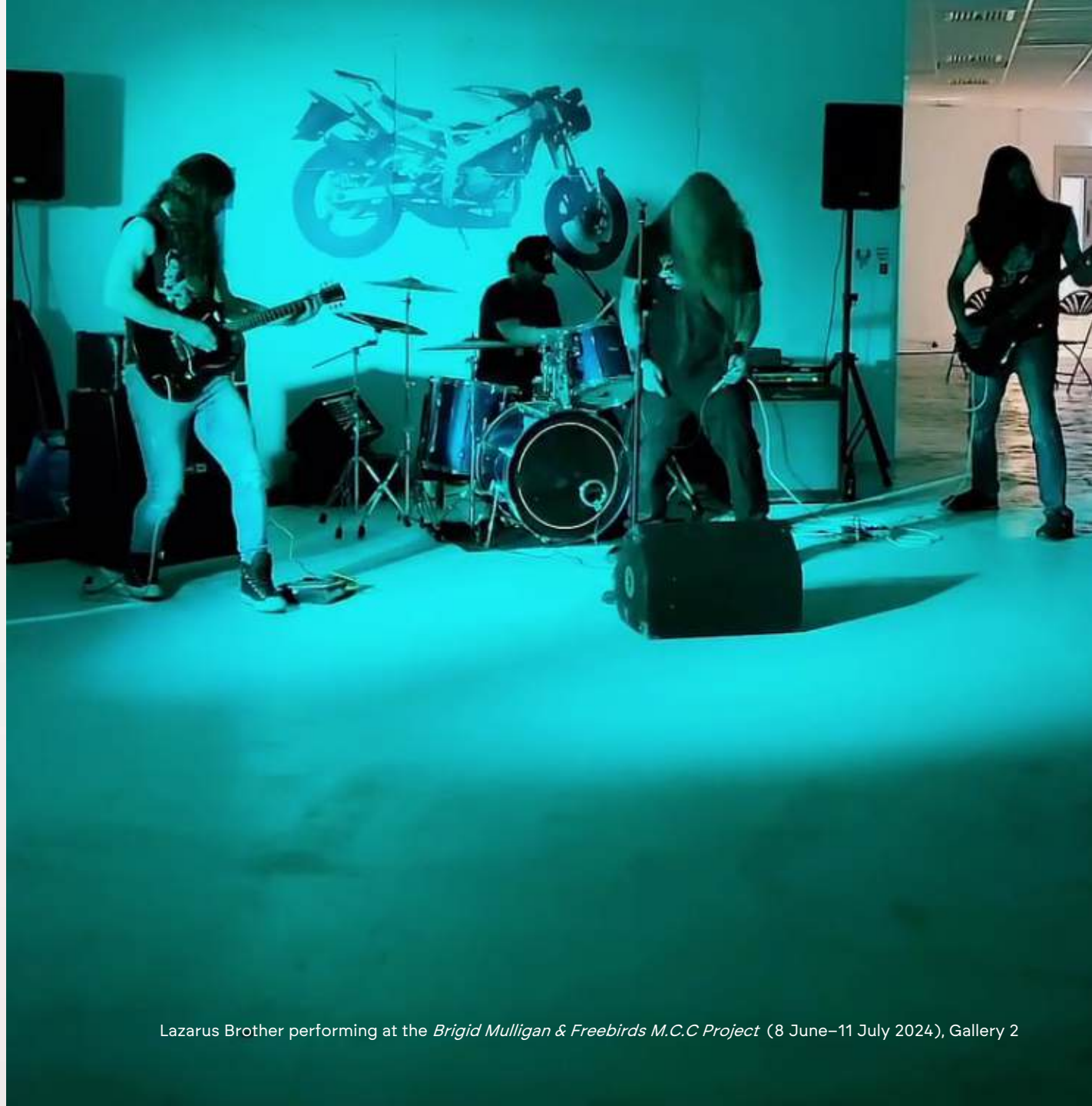
Bob Speers – *Thin Place* (4–25 April 2024), Gallery 1

Photo credit: Simon Mills





Annemarie Mullan, Cré Collective group exhibition – *A State of Being* (2–23 May 2024), Gallery 2
Photo credit: Simon Mills



Lazarus Brother performing at the *Brigid Mulligan & Freebirds M.C.C Project* (8 June–11 July 2024), Gallery 2



Ashley Holmes – *Counting the Days* (6–27 June 2024), Gallery 1
Photo credit: Simon Mills



Eimear Nic Roibeaird – *Seek the Fair Land / Tabhair Ar
Ais an Oíche Aréir* (8 Aug–5 Sept 2024), Gallery 1
Photo credit: Simon Mills



Eoin Mac Lochlainn, group show – *What do we want?* (8 Aug–5 Sept 2024), curated by Olivier Cornet
Photo credit: Simon Mills

Achievements & performance:

Gallery programme continued...

- **We Are QSS at 40 (26 Sept–12 Dec):** 40th anniversary exhibition curated by Eamonn Maxwell, featuring 61 current and former members. Included talks, workshops, guided tours for schools and community groups, peer-critique sessions, portfolio reviews with four invited curators (Riann Coulter, FE McWilliam Gallery, Banbridge; Ciara Hickey, PS2, Belfast; Patrick Murphy, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin; and, Aoife Ruane, Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda) and open studios (included in Belfast International Arts Festival's 2024 programme). Our birthday programme was generously funded via a BCC Arts & Heritage Award and a grant from the Esme Mitchell Trust.
- **Emergence 2025 (16 Jan–20 Feb):** Annual showcase for recent Belfast School of Art graduates, featuring 22 artists.

- **Rachel Wharton – *Cow From Memory* (6–20 Feb):** Freeland's Fellowship graduating exhibition, with artist talks for students and the public.
- **Darcy Patterson – *Which Once Was* (13 Mar–10 Apr):** Sculptural works using repurposed materials to explore memory and renewal. An accompanying video work drew attention to the quiet beauty of everyday objects.
- **[de]fragmentation (13 Mar–10 Apr):** Curated by Meadhbh McIlgorm; artists revisited past works/materials to explore sustainability and creative reuse. Included a curator-led conversation with invited artist Lian Bell as part of the Imagine Belfast Festival of Ideas & Politics.

We Are QSS at 40

Curated by Eamonn Maxwell

26th Sept - 12th Dec 2024

Gallery 1



We Are QSS at 40, (26 Sept–12 Dec 2024), Gallery 1

Photo credit: Simon Mills

Opening speeches for *We Are QSS at 40*

l-r: Cllr Sam Nelson (on behalf of Belfast City Council), exhibition curator Eamonn Maxwell, and QSS Chair James Fair

Photo credit: Tim Millen





We are QSS at 40 opening night, Gallery 2
Photo credit: Tim Millen



Install shots from *We are QSS at 40*, (26 Sept–12 Dec 2024), Gallery 1 & 2
Artwork by l-r: Yasmine Robinson, Jonathan Conlon, Majella Clancy, Joy Gerrard, Susan Connolly and Clement McAleer
Photo credit: Simon Mills



Darcy Patterson – *Which Once Was* solo exhibition (13 Mar–10 Apr 2025), Gallery 1

Photo credit: Simon Mills

Achievements & performance:

Members' wider achievements

QSS artists were active locally, nationally, and internationally:

- 62% exhibited in Belfast venues beyond QSS (Arcade Studios & Gallery, Belfast Exposed, Belfast Print Workshop, The Blackbox, Catalyst, Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, Digital Art Studios, Engine Room Gallery, Fenderesky Gallery, Lagan TowPath, La Roche House, The MAC, Platform Arts Belfast, Titanic Drawing Offices, Ulster Museum, Ulster Sports Club, Ulster University and Vault Artist Studios).
- 38% exhibited in other Northern Ireland venues (Ards Art Centre, Bangor Castle Walled Garden, Braid Arts Centre, FE McWilliam Gallery, R-Space Gallery, Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre, Strule Arts Centre and The Courthouse, Bangor).

- 34% exhibited in the Republic of Ireland (including, but not limited to, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork; IMMA, Dublin; Ormston House, Limerick; Highlanes Gallery, Dundalk; RHA Gallery, Dublin, Waterford Gallery of Art and Wexford Arts Centre).
- 22% exhibited elsewhere in the UK (Bankside Gallery, London; Central St Martin's, London; OXO Gallery, London; Royal Academy, London; Sim Smith Gallery, London; Hyde Park Art Club, Leeds; The Laundrette Project Space, Bristol; The Arts Institute, Plymouth; RBSA Gallery, Birmingham).
- International exhibitions included Bangkok, Beijing, Berlin, Kyiv, Riga, Salzburg, and Wuppertal.
- 24% contributed to third-level arts education (Belfast Metropolitan College, Belfast School of Art, Waterford Institute of Technology).



Ian Cumberland, recipient of *ACNI's 2024 Major Individual Artist Award*

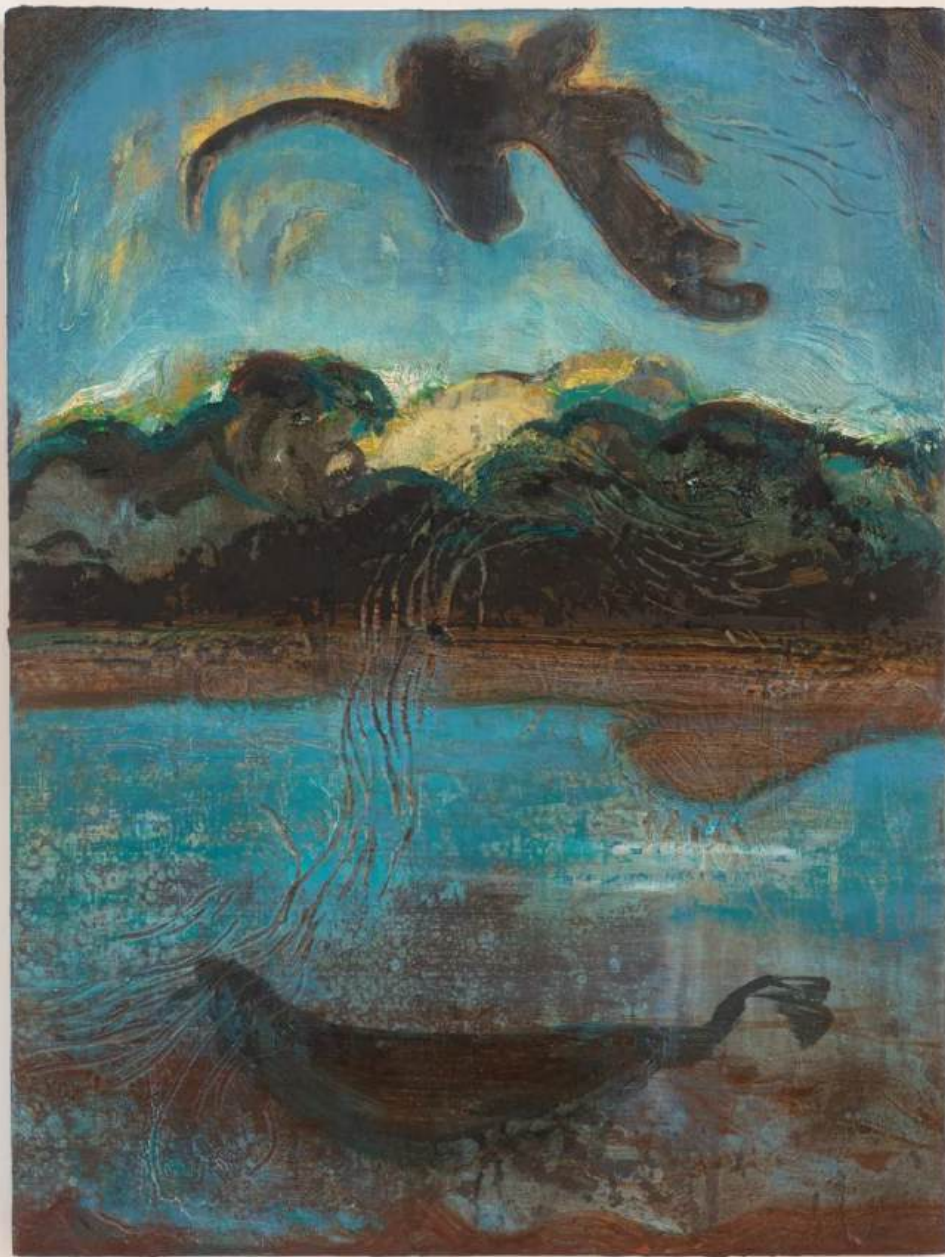


Anushiya Sundaralingam performing *Tappi Odu (Flee)* at the Ulster Museum, 30 Oct 2024



Susan Connolly, *GROUND (100+one)*, solo exhibition at the FE McWilliam Gallery, 21 Sept- 2 Nov 2024

Photo credit: Simon Mills



Left: Tim Millen, *While your back was turned* solo exhibition, Ards Arts Centre. 12 Dec 2024 - 18 Jan 2025
Above: Niamh Clarke, *a hand's breath – after Woodman (2023)*, Art Riddler group show, Charlemont Square





Left: Amanda Coogan at the *Bangkok Art Biennale*, Oct 2024
Above: Jennifer Trouton, *In Plain Sight*, RHA Gallery, Dublin, 6 Sept – 20 Oct 2024

Financial snapshot:

Income	31.3.25	31.3.24
Rental income	50,143	50,068
Programming income	4,562	12,077
Grant income	65,932	54,448
Total income	120,637	116,592

Queen Street Studios	31.3.25	31.3.24
Total (deficit)/surplus on operations	(2,611)	13,926

Expenditure	31.3.25	31.3.24
Rent payable	21,500	21,500
Overheads	24,321	35,102
Staffing / consultancy fees*	43,772	24,002
Programming	17,655	6,037
Accountancy	2,638	2,149
Depreciation	7,018	6,104
Other costs	6,344	7,772
Total expenditure	123,248	102,666

** Includes Digital Media Officer, Strategic Planning and Relocation Preparation consultancy fees*

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 2024-25 this would equate to approximately £30,000 to £60,000. In an environment of short-term funding and continued pressures on financial resources for the Arts the board believe that this amount would provide sufficient time for the organisation to respond to specific challenges.

	31.3.25	31.3.24
Undesignated funds	43,854	45,122
	31.3.25	31.3.24
Relocation fund	26,000	26,000
Sustainability fund	8,000	8,000



Cathy Scullion (left) and Alacoque Davey (right), *[de]fragmentation* group show, (13 Mar–10 Apr 2025), Gallery 2

Photo credit: Simon Mills

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

 [qssartstudios](https://www.instagram.com/qssartstudios)

 [qssartiststudios](https://www.facebook.com/qssartiststudios)