



digital arts studios

Overview: Who We Are

DAS is a not-for-profit, charity operating a shared studio space based in Belfast's cultural Cathedral Quarter. DAS is for artists and creatives to work, learn and advance their careers. We were born out of a desire to support and encourage visual artists whose work merges with digital technologies. We value and promote the convergence of art and technology, and like those disciplines and industries we are dynamic and evolving.

DAS is the only facility of its kind in Northern Ireland to promote the convergence of visual arts and digital technologies. DAS specifically supports artists who engage in a wide range of creative activities grounded in visual art whilst exploring new technologies.

The DAS team consists of Dr Angela Halliday, Dr Catherine Devlin and Dr Richard Davis who collectively have over 60 years' experience of working in the arts. We are a technically skilled and experienced team with our own art practices outside of our roles in DAS.

Sustainability, growth and profile

Following across-the-board organisational growth in 2023 – 2024, DAS continues to see increased demand on services, resources and programme. We comfortably achieve 100% uptake on residencies, workshops and other participatory opportunities. Our audience figures are growing exponentially, and our earned income is moderately rising year on year. The organisation has shown not only successful recovery following covid/lockdowns (March 2020 – Oct 2021) and the loss of premises in a fire (Oct 2022) but has achieved steady growth since becoming established in our current premises at Exchange Place (Nov 2022 - present).

2023- 2024 Activities and Programming

6 exhibitions showing work of 19 artists with 1292 public audience
9 workshops with 56 participants
13 intensive residencies for home artists

1 international residency
1 public panel discussion on digital art
2 artists' talks
1 digital artist meetup with *Concept Null*
11 support hub participants, receiving 65 hours of technical support
We also provided year-round equipment hire, desk hire and membership to artists.

Funding Success

In 2023-2024 Digital Arts Studios received funding from the following sources:

- In July 2023 the Foyle Foundation awarded DAS £10,000 towards core costs over the following 12 months.
- Belfast City Council awarded DAS an *Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grant* of £8800.
- The Arts Council of Northern Ireland awarded Digital Arts Studios a grant of up to **£9,997.00** from its National Lottery funded Organisation Digital Evolution Awards for its project XR Research & Development Lab.
- ACNI awarded DAS through its Annual Funding Programme – £63673.00

Total Funding Received: £92470

Looking forward to 2024 - 2025

Our priority for 2024-2025 is to sustain the current levels of participation, audience and outcomes. We wish to continue and develop, without depleting our resources despite ongoing long-term cuts to arts funding. (Government investment in the arts in NI has declined in cash terms by 40% since 2011.¹ The baseline allocated to the Arts Councils per capita are NI: £5.07, Wales: £10.51 and RoI: £22.50.)

We believe that supporting the delivery of our programme will bring continued growth as the programme is designed to increase access, reach more people and engage audiences, both existing and new. We aim to continue to raise our profile both locally and internationally through exhibitions, residencies and the Future Labs Programme. We wish to focus on developing specific areas of the programme including a solo exhibition opportunity for a local artist, the creation of new digital artwork through our XR Lab and an International Residency.

The 2024-25 programme has been designed to support these development aims and our wider strategic priorities. Our Priorities in 2024-2025 are to

1. Support increased demand on services, facilities, resources and opportunities by sustaining and maintaining essential staff resources: specifically, the Creative Technician and the Residency Coordinator.

¹ <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/a-guide-to-advocacy#keyfacts>, accessed 17th June 2024, 14:33.

2. Increase capacity for provision of support services including
 1. Support Hub
 2. Workshops and training: Future Labs Programme
 3. XR research and development Lab
 4. Access to equipment
3. Maintain and develop our profile through providing opportunities to produce and engage with digital art.
 1. Increase awareness and understanding of digital art
 2. Create more online engagement with the public.
 3. Reach more artists who work with digital arts.

Long Term Ambitions

DAS has a long-term ambition to deliver the first dedicated digital arts focussed gallery in Belfast, alongside the studio provision, residency opportunities and other resources that we currently provide. This ambition encompasses our immediate priority which is to acquire fully accessible premises. It also embraces our desire to develop the support we offer to artists working in Belfast by providing a physical space to experiment with digital technology, to showcase new media work and to raise the profile of local digital artists by delivering an annual programme of innovative visual, digital arts. These ambitions will require relocating premises to a more accessible and fit-for-purpose space. This is a significant challenge given the costs of rent and the level of annual funding at standstill rates on an ongoing basis. This is an even higher priority since the loss of our premises in Donegall Street and relocation to smaller premises in Exchange Place. These premises are not fully accessible, and therefore we aim to move as soon as is possible.