

Trustees Report 2024-2025

Overview: Who We Are

The Digital Arts Studios (DAS) is Northern Ireland's only dedicated facility promoting the convergence of visual arts and digital technologies. Based in Belfast City Centre, we provide artists and creatives with essential access to digital production resources, technical support, training, studio space, showcasing opportunities, and a strong peer network. Through our shared XR Lab, Production Studio, Residency Programme, and Support Hub, we support visual artists at all career stages and from a wide range of disciplines including filmmaking, music, design, photography, writing, and immersive media. Our work addresses a pressing need in the arts sector: enabling artists to engage with evolving and often complex digital technologies, such as VR, XR, and real-time 3D, which are costly, technically demanding, and rapidly changing.

Impact Summary - 2024-2025

Between March 2024 and April 2025, DAS supported 331 participants and reached an audience of 3,500 - representing a 133% increase in participants from the previous year. Around 50% of our beneficiaries are regular users through our membership programme. While most are based in Northern Ireland, we also work with artists across the UK, Ireland, and internationally and artists regularly travel from England and Ireland to participate in our programme. DAS plays a vital role in ensuring that artists can overcome barriers to working with digital technologies, supporting innovation and creative development in the sector. Our users consistently tell us that our space, technical expertise, training, and opportunities for collaboration and showcasing are key to their growth. Without DAS, many artists and cultural organisations in the region would lack the support and infrastructure needed to engage with digital and immersive media.

Key Partnerships & Sector Leadership - 2024/25

- We contributed to the launch of Arts Council Ireland's Digital Arts Policy at BETA Festival 2024, sharing insights from our practice and championing the role of artist-led digital initiatives.
- Immersive Arts – Info Session: In collaboration with Future Screens NI, Belfast XR Festival, and Ulster Screen Academy, DAS co-hosted an information session on opportunities in immersive media, providing artists and creatives with practical guidance and insight into industry trends and funding.
- DAS facilitated an ACNI Digital Evolution Info Session: DAS worked to support artists and organisations applying to the Digital Evolution Awards, offering guidance on how to develop digital projects and best use available funding. This reflects our commitment to supporting artists navigating digital production and innovation.
- S+T+ARTS4Water II: In partnership with ADAPT Research Centre, Belfast Harbour, and other international partners, DAS is supporting an

environmental residency programme as a local expert. We are supporting artist Lauren Moffat to produce work that uses digital and immersive technologies to explore water-related themes and port ecosystems.

Sustainability, growth and profile

This has been a high-impact year for DAS with growing public visibility and sector leadership. The year has demonstrated:

- Significant audience growth (both online and in-person)
- Strong engagement with artists and organisational partners
- High programme output on a modest budget
- Increased income generation.

We have delivered measurable value in digital arts and show clear potential for strategic investment and scaling.

Activities and Programming

- 12 Artists in Residence (Home Residency)
- 7 Artists Hired Equipment (paid)
- 77 equipment uses by artists in residence (included in residency fee)
- 3 Artists hired the Studio (Paid)
- 9 Digital Art workshops delivered
- 7 artist facilitators
- 58 workshop participants
- 7 Public Exhibitions in-house
- 42 Artists exhibiting work
- 1680 exhibition visitors
- 1 Public Showcase of Digital & Immersive Arts from Northern Ireland at the MAC (facilitated by ACNI).
- 4 organisational members including Flax Arts Studios, Paragon Studios, Catalyst Arts and Big Telly Theatre Company.
- 40 Individual members

The **Strategic Aims for 2025–2026** focus on enhancing the residency programme by introducing diverse strands and removing the requirement for a final exhibition, allowing greater artistic flexibility. Plans include establishing a Production Lab by repurposing Studio One to support innovation in digital arts and build a collaborative creative community. The strategy also aims to strengthen artist-led skills development, positioning artists as central to activity. Underpinning these goals is a commitment to reaffirming the organisation's core value by engaging stakeholders, refining priorities based on feedback, and adapting responsively to ensure continued relevance to artists' needs and the organisation's strengths.