

a·n

ASSEMBLY



Image: Ieva Rojūtā, You Won't Go Far, mixed media piece from solo exhibition 'This is life and not a fantasy', PS2, 2019.
PS2 office photographed by Clia Gerbault, July 2023.

Assembly Belfast:

Who cares (about artist visibility, aspirations and support - or the lack thereof - in Northern Ireland)?

Wednesday 4 – Friday 6 October 2023

Programmed by PS² in partnership with Catalyst Arts

a-n.co.uk/assembly/assembly-belfast

Introduction

Assembly Belfast: Who cares? This gently provocative title frames the talks, screenings, panels, workshops, and Q&As that make up the first a-n Assembly in Northern Ireland. Our place, slightly hidden on an island on the periphery of the UK, often feels adrift from our neighbours' prevailing cultural ecologies.

Wednesday 4 October - pre-Assembly - online: An introduction to the visual art landscape of Northern Ireland, opening opportunities for interest and exchange for artists in the UK and Ireland.

Thursday 5 October - Assembly - in person: Artists, curators and organisations will speak about how they adapt, cope, struggle or fail in an arts-rich but resource-poor climate. Through conversation, we will nurture similarities and inspiration, helping us to generate answers to questions around how we improve the arts ecology in Northern Ireland.

Friday 6 October - post-Assembly - in person: We will take stock and develop a plan of action, proposing new programmes and a timeline, to support the survival of the arts in Northern Ireland.

Register to attend:

a-n.co.uk/assembly/assembly-belfast

Day 1: Wednesday 4 October 2023

Online via Zoom, 6–8.30pm

6–6.30pm: Welcome by PS² and a-n outlining the Assembly Belfast programme

6.30–6.35pm: Film screening: Julie Lovett

6.35–6.45pm: Film screening: Michael Hanna

6.45–7.10pm: Conversation with filmmakers on topics raised by the films; moderated by Ciara Hickey. Followed by Q&A

7.10–7.15pm: Break

7.15–8pm: Provocations – How does our art ecology grow? (in this economy!)

Artists and curators share provocations which address issues of cultural deficiency on a regional or policy level. Followed by a discussion and opportunity for attendee questions.

Davy Mahon - fighting the cultural brain-drain / Deirdre McKenna - artists' pay, rights and unions / Clodagh Boyce - current pitfalls and future dreams of inclusion in NI and RoI / Husk Bennett - the toxic opportunity cycle / Mitch Conlon - artists' strikes

8–8.05pm: Break

8:05–8.25pm: Question time – Mr Mahon will see you now...

PS² resident Agony Uncle will respond to dilemmas submitted by artists and cultural practitioners in a segment which is both entertaining and enlightening.

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Day 2: Thursday 5 October 2023

In-person at QSS, Belfast, 10am–4pm

9.30–10am: Registration and refreshments

10–10.15am: Welcome by PS², QSS and a-n

10.15–11am: Panel discussion: artists' working practices and conditions in Northern Ireland, personal aspirations and structural limitations

With artists Molly Martin, Vasiliki Stasinaki, and Charlie Beare, moderated by Rachel Botha.

11–11.45am: Break with refreshments and an introduction to mid-morning sessions on artist-led/run organisations and their support structures

11.45am–12.25pm: What more could we do?

Panel conversation on the types of artist support that grassroots arts organisations offer. With Alissa Kleist and Ciara Hickey (Uphold), Catherine Hemelryk (CCA Derry~Londonderry), and Ronan Smyth (Flax Art Studios). Moderated by Davy Mahon.

12.25–1.10pm: Workshop and breakout session: Companion Planting

Companion Planting is an informal reference and discussion group developed by independent curator Cecelia Graham, which aims to re-imagine future arts organisations and initiatives through the lens of non-productive and collaborative modes of working. Cecelia will be joined by artist Niamh Seana Meehan as they invite us to consider alternative organisational and governance structures, finding collective strategies of resistance and support.

1.10–2.15pm: Lunch by Loaf Catering with a gallery preview of HERmetic: Sinéad Aldridge, Louise Wallace, Patricia Doherty, and Mary Theresa Keown

Day 2: Thursday 5 October 2023 (cont.)

In-person at QSS, Belfast, 10am – 4pm

2.15–2.35pm: The Money Tree: an introduction to Ireland's Artist Basic Income Scheme from Tadhg Ó'Cuirrín, who will discuss how the award has affected their practice and career. Followed by a Q&A.

2.35–2.45pm: Break

2.45–3.10pm: Care as a curatorial practice in the artist-led sector

With Ciara Hickey and Jane Morrow.

3.10–3.30pm: Branching out and building bridges

With Viviana Checchia (Void Art Centre) and Niamh Brown (Ormston House).

3.30–4pm: Closing remarks, followed by a break and an evening of networking

6–8pm: Late Night Art

An informal tour of organisations, exhibitions and events, including PS², Catalyst Arts, Belfast Exposed, and more.

8–10pm: Afterparty at Vault Artist Studios (Marlborough House)

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Day 3: Friday 6 October 2023

In-person at QSS, Belfast, 11am–1pm

11am–1pm: Seeing the wood for the trees

This final facilitated session will consolidate observations and support Assembly attendees to co-design a clear forward plan for the region. This session will contribute to a future new Visual Arts Strategy for Northern Ireland.



Image: Julie Lovett. Still from Success strategy. Film, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.

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Assembly Belfast programmed by PS² in partnership with Catalyst Arts, hosted by QSS and Vault Artist Studios

PS² = Paragon Studios + Project Space. PS² is an artist-led collective, connecting art and society, in the centre of Belfast. We undertake projects both onsite, in our Project Space and offsite - in urban, suburban and rural locations – to enable the public to enjoy and participate in art and their locale. Artist and sector development is a big part of our work. We have ten artists' studio spaces; three annual in-residence programmes for curators, writers and collectives; a range of artist development opportunities including the Freelands Artist Programme; and are host to some 30 project artists each year for exhibitions and events.

Catalyst Arts is an artist-led, members-based organisation, which produces an annual exhibition and programme which has been instrumental in launching the careers of many artists.

QSS (formerly Queen Street Studios) was established in 1984, and is the longest-running studio organisation in Belfast. Located in the east of the city, QSS offers 48 self-contained studios for professional artists, as well as two large and fully accessible galleries, showcasing work by studio members and artists selected through open submission.

Vault Artist Studios is an artist-led, not-for-profit arts charity with an active community of over 100 members across two sites and many different artforms.

a-n is the largest artists' membership organisation in the UK with over 30,000 members. We support artists and those who work with them in many practical ways, acting on behalf of our membership and the visual arts sector to improve artists' livelihoods. To find out more about a-n membership, visit a-n.co.uk/join



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