

Live Art UK

the national network of Live Art promoters



April 9, 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Live Art UK network writes in response to the announcement by Arts Council England (ACE) of its National Portfolio Organisation awards for 2012-15. We support ACE and its current aims "to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives".

It will take time to fully analyse the NPO decisions and their potential impact on the Live Art sector. Whilst we welcome the news that many organizations and artists engaging with Live Art have received increased funding and others have received funding for the first time, some key organizations and artists are no longer part of the Portfolio, and other dynamic new players have been turned down for NPO status. The overall reduction in national arts funding will undoubtedly affect the livelihoods of artists, arts workers and arts organisations, as well as cultural provision in our communities. No one can yet know how these, and broader NPO decisions, might affect the ecologies of diverse, emergent and experimental practices in the long term, but it is something we must all be attentive to.

Live Art UK understands the difficult decisions faced by ACE and appreciates their efforts to strike a delicate balance between supporting the bigger, national institutions and the smaller, independent organizations committed to innovation and risk. As many others have emphasized, it is important to reiterate that it was the Government's Settlement last Autumn which resulted in a cut to ACE's budget for funded organisations of 14.9%, and the responsibility for these drastic and damaging cuts must ultimately rest with the Government and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

This reduction in ACE's funding is a matter of great concern to Live Art UK, which supports the emergent and experimental practices of a diverse range of artists, and works towards the effective development and promotion of the Live Art sector. This sector is primarily one of small, entrepreneurial, resource-light organisations and visionary individuals characterised by strong partnership working and new business models. With reduced funding available, we will inevitably experience a reduction in the diversity of voices expressing themselves, and a decline in the cultural richness of everyday life. The UK's capacity to encourage artists to take risks, to self-reflect and to see the world in alternative ways will be severely diminished.

In this context, we are particularly worried that a number of disabled and culturally diverse led organizations, and others dedicated to the possibilities of digital technologies, have received significant, or, in some instances, total cuts to their funding. We are equally worried that organisations developed through the unique dynamics of artist-led culture have also been

excluded from NPO; such organisations are key support mechanisms for the professional development needs of artists and in particular support entrepreneurship by artists in ways that influence more formal institutional models which assimilate the tropes and methods which a healthy artist-led culture incubates. A healthy ecology for Live Art needs a diverse regional spread of festivals, development programmes and venues. Some organisations will certainly survive without NPO funding by remaining responsive and fleet of foot. Others will undoubtedly not survive thereby reducing the fragile network of support for experimentation, distribution and development across the UK.

Live Art UK is also concerned about DCMS's plan to cut ACE's administrative costs by 50%. The National Audit Office's recent critical report into financial management at the DCMS also highlights this issue. ACE recently completed a major restructuring, which included significant cost savings, and is now implementing a considered national strategy for the future of the arts. Further cuts to ACE will undercut and compromise ACE's capacity to implement and oversee this new strategy, and singularly fails to acknowledge its recent structural review. Beyond its function as a grant-distribution organisation, ACE should be able to play a crucial role in encouraging a rich and diverse creative ecology in this country.

We know that England will be increasingly dependent on the strength of the knowledge industries in the years ahead. Emerging economies are on course to outstrip our industrial and manufacturing capacity. Now, more than ever, we are reliant on the quality of our education, and our ability to communicate and think creatively. This cannot be done without the nurturing of the arts and facilitating access to higher education. The cuts to ACE, the cuts to the arts and humanities within Higher Education, and increases in university fees will not facilitate the growth of knowledge industries, and can only lead to a diminished society.

Sincerely,

Live Art UK: The Arches, Arnolfini, Artsadmin, BAC, The Basement, the Bluecoat, Chapter Arts Centre, Chelsea Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre, Compass Live Art in Yorkshire and the Humber, Fierce Festival, Forest Fringe, greenroom, hÅb, Home live art, Inbetween Time Productions, LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), Live Art Development Agency, Live at LICA (Nuffield Theatre Lancaster), New Work Network, Theatre Bristol, and Wunderbar

Editors notes:

A shorter version of the Live Art UK statement can be found here: www.liveartuk.org

Live Art UK is the national network of Live Art promoters, working to support and develop the Live Art infrastructure for the benefit of artists and audiences. The Live Art UK network explores new models and partnerships for the promotion of Live Art; develops new ways to increase the national and international visibility of Live Art; initiates strategies for a more sustainable future for Live Art practitioners and promoters; and aims to provide a representative voice for the Live Art Sector in the UK.

www.liveartuk.org

After over 14 years of activity in the sector, as a unique artist-led organisation with over 1,500 members nationally, Live Art UK member New Work Network has been unsuccessful in its NPO submission. This decision may jeopardise New Work Network as a national support body for the professional development needs of emerging and established artists. Please contact Co-Directors, Jason E Bowman and Orlagh Woods on 020 75399373 for further information.

www.newworknetwork.info

After nearly 30 years as one of the pillars of both the national touring infrastructure and of artist development in the North West region, Live Art UK member **greenroom** has been unsuccessful in its NPO submission. So many national artists refer to it as 'coming home', and without **greenroom**'s support, time, space and resources, an echoing void is left which threatens both Manchester's artistic community and hugely impoverishes the city's flourishing audiences. Please contact Artistic Director Garfield Allen on 0161 615 0501 for further information.

www.greenroomarts.org