

Research paper

ACE Wednesday

a-n's analysis of Arts Council England's new National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) for funding 2012-15.

Key points:

- 144 organisations in the new visual arts portfolio (187 RFOs in 2008)
- £211,753,389 to be spent on visual arts over three years (13% of NPO budget)
- 23 organisations that were not RFOs are awarded NPO funding
- 48% of all visual arts NPO funding goes to the 'Top 20' galleries and production agencies.

NPO aims to:

- Provide ongoing support to key visual arts venues across England and encourage their leadership role locally, regionally and nationally as international-class facilities where everyone can experience great art
- Encourage artists' practice and career development through investment in artists' workspace and production facilities, artist-led spaces, and professional support organisations
- Maintain a resilient and diverse ecology that reflects, on a nationwide basis, the richness of work currently being made, and encompasses organisations of varying types and scales

Galleries are the winners!**The new portfolio strengthens the core network of galleries and producing agencies with half of the 'top 20' receiving increased funding.**

Included are BALTIC Gateshead (now the best ACE-funded gallery in England, receiving almost double the grant of its nearest rival Whitechapel Gallery), Mima Middlesbrough, FACT Liverpool and in London Serpentine, South London Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery and Camden Arts Centre, Ikon Birmingham, Modern Art Oxford, and new galleries Turner Contemporary Margate, The Hepworth Wakefield and Firstsite Colchester

Producing agencies and studios do well

Funding for commissioning and producing agencies Artangel and Liverpool Biennial is strengthened with Forma and Locus+ retained in the portfolio. Artists' studios and artist-led spaces such as Artgene, Spike Island, East Street Arts, Yorkshire Art Space, Wysing Arts Centre, Bow Arts and Studio Voltaire (both newly-funded) are supported along with other newcomers Project Space Leeds, Workplace Gallery Gateshead and London-based commissioning and exhibitions agency Peer.

Top 20 NPOs	Region	RFO 11/12	NPO 12/13	NPO 13/14	NPO 14/15
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art	North East	2,813,486	2,963,000	3,034,112	3,112,999
Crafts Council	London	2,601,718	2,484,641	2,541,788	2,612,896
Whitechapel Gallery	London	1,171,310	1,500,000	1,536,000	1,575,936
Yorkshire Sculpture Park	Yorkshire	1,363,952	1,302,574	1,333,836	1,369,812
Serpentine Gallery	London	883,734	1,185,734	1,214,144	1,245,712
Ikon Gallery Ltd.	West Midlands	1,003,910	1,003,910	1,027,000	1,053,702
FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology)	North West	1,000,112	1,000,112	1,023,115	1,049,716
Nottingham Contemporary Ltd.	East Midlands	955,363	1,000,000	1,023,000	1,049,598
Arnolfini Gallery Ltd.	South West	994,933	994,933	1,017,816	1,044,280
Cornerhouse	North West	805,748	870,000	935,000	1,028,775
Camden Arts Centre	London	703,744	917,055	938,148	959,725

New Art Gallery Walsall	West Midlands	876,408	876,408	896,565	919,876
Institute of Contemporary Arts	London	1,326,209	900,000	900,000	900,000
Firstsite	East	617,131	850,000	850,000	850,000
Artangel	London	552,943	754,000	752,000	778,000
Watershed Arts Trust Ltd.	South West	320,131	740,000	757,020	776,703
Institute of International Visual Arts	London	965,634	600,000	600,000	600,000
Mima	North East	185,280	500,000	516,000	533,000
The New Art Exchange Ltd.	East Midlands	398,551	500,000	511,500	524,788
			20,942,367	21,407,044	21,985,529

National bodies substantially cut

National agencies including National Society for Education in Art and Design, NewWorkNetwork, VAGA, Visiting Arts, International Curators Forum and National Federation of Artists Studio Providers have been axed. Engage gets a 50% increase “as the sector's lead specialist agency for gallery education which will play a key role nationally to help visual arts organisations to develop further their already extensive work in this area.”

Godfrey Worsdale, VAGAs Chair said: “It is extremely concerning that an organisation with the reputation and history of VAGA is no longer able to benefit from regular funding from Arts Council England.”

a-n becomes an NPO with 10% grant cut in real terms as does Axis with 9% and public art specialist Ixia who despite taking on the PublicArtOnline resource, got a 15% cut in real terms.

"It's good to have Arts Council England investment at a time when delivering our mission – to raise the profile and recognition of artists within society – is more important than ever. Artists have suffered badly over the three years of this economic climate. We urge all arts organisations who rely on the creativity of artists to realise their ambitions for audiences for the arts to take every opportunity to support artists both financially and artistically." - a-n Director of Programmes Susan Jones

Allocation by geographical region 2011 and 2008

Region	Total £	% per region 2011	% per region 2008
London	79,912,781	38%	43.5%
North East	23,083,602	11%	8.5%
South East	20,373,435	10%	8.6%
Yorkshire	18,475,136	9%	7.2%
North West	18,621,008	9%	9.3%
South West	16,396,162	8%	6.4%
West Midlands	13,877,071	7%	8.2%
East	9,585,558	5%	3.3%
East Midlands	11,428,636	5%	5%

Support for craft and design

The infrastructure for the crafts and applied arts has been pared down. Crafts Council Chair Joanna Foster said, "Clearly there is mixed news for individual organisations in the sector. But, we are sure that the entrepreneurial spirit of the makers, curators, gallerists, educators and craft professionals that have made the profile of craft so strong in recent years will continue."

Contemporary Glass Society with over 600 professional members says: "We feel we fulfil a really vital role, especially as glass is so under-recognised as a contemporary artform. Over the last few years we've worked hard to raise the profile of contemporary glass. We're a progressive organisation; we could have coped with a percentage cut, but to take a 100% is devastating and does threaten us. But we're determined to survive."

Organisation	Region	Status 2012	Note
Crafts Council	National	NPO	15% cut
Craftspace	West Midlands	NPO	11% cut
The Hub	East Midlands	NPO*	
National Glass Centre (now funded jointly with NGCA)	North East	NPO	
London Design Festival	London	NPO	New RFO in 2009
Contemporary Glass Society	West Midlands	cut	New RFO in 2008
Contemporary Applied Arts	London	cut	New RFO in 2008
Designed & Made	North East	cut	New RFO in 2008

* as part of a consortium with Design Factory and Arts NK under the trading name of North Kesteven District Council.

Prioritising organisations that directly produce art and make the most significant contribution to our goals meant cuts to some agencies with more of a support function.

Development layer cut

ACE's cuts have severely damaged an important layer in the infrastructure for artists' initiatives and professional development, impacting on the livelihood of artists and future vitality and sustainability of the visual arts.

ACE said "Prioritising organisations that directly produce art and make the most significant contribution to our goals meant cuts to some agencies with more of a support function. This may leave gaps in terms of visual arts sector advocacy and leadership, and we hope to work alongside the sector to address these."

In support of members and all artists, AIR Artists Interaction and Representation added its weight to the bevy of campaigns urging ACE to think again.

"AIR watched with dismay as Arts Council England unveiled the new landscape for visual arts funding on 30 March 2011 in which visual artists have been hit the hardest. "A balanced portfolio" has largely been interpreted as "supporting lottery-funded galleries and institutions" at the expense of support for grassroots artist-led initiatives.

"Amongst those facing a total cut are artist-run organisations such as Castlefield (Manchester), Isis Arts (Newcastle), Artsway (Hampshire), PVA (Dorset), Storey Gallery (Lancaster), Shisha (Manchester) and Vivid (Birmingham).

"Such small artist-run centres provide essential opportunities to make, test and discuss new work, often bringing in small grant and professional development funds.

"Castlefield director Kwong Lee said: "Since 1984, Castlefield Gallery is proud to have provided literally thousands of artists with exhibiting opportunities at pivotal stages in their career who have received national and international acclaim and invaluable professional development support. It is recognised as contributing significantly to the visual arts infrastructure and the region's art ecology."

“AIR Council member Katriona Beales commented: “The development layer that supports the transition from emerging to established artists has been seriously damaged.”

“AIR is concerned that large-scale galleries and institutions – many of whom have been awarded increases – will not move in to plug this gap in support for artists at early and mid-career. It calls for funded galleries to budget for fees at professional rates to artists for undertaking commissions and exhibitions and other arts employment. AIR also urges arts institutions to play a greater role in supporting the critical mass of artists by actively offering professional development opportunities and critique to more artists in their regions.

“This kind of collaboration is imperative in a time of austerity. Such support of the critical mass of artists will guarantee that quality visual arts will emerge in the future, for the benefit of all. For without artists, there would be no contemporary visual art.”

Blogs, Facebook pages, Google groups and petitions were set up to record discussions around, and support for organisations affected by, the cuts:

Isis Arts (North East) “At a time when terms like “digital” working and “diversity” and “inclusion” are overly used in reports and strategies, Isis is one organisation genuinely working in an inclusive way with artists, incubating creative ideas that often lead artists to create new and exciting work.” Karen Davies on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

onedotzero (London) “Thanks for words of support. Read our response” on [onedotzero.com/blog](https://www.onedotzero.com/blog)

Castlefield Gallery (Manchester) “Support Castlefield Gallery – Please add your comments on how you value us on new Tumblr blog”

MuteMagazine “Get involved in the discussion around arts cuts via our Google group”

Side Gallery (Newcastle) “LOVE SIDE GALLERY! Add your name and comments to the petition” at [gopetition.com](https://www.gopetition.com)

Artsway (Hampshire) “I am astonished that ArtSway, who have consistently punched way above their weight in terms of quality of output, exhibition programme, residency

programme, associates support scheme, and artists' books as well as supporting emerging and more established artists through New Forest Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, have had their budget completely cut. Arts Council England has made the wrong decision." Gayle Chong Kwan on artsway.org.uk

Greenroom Theatre (Manchester) "Thanks for all your messages of support" at greenroomarts.org

Globe Gallery (Newcastle) "Check out Investors in Globe Fundraising Launch" on eventbrite.com

For more on arts funding see the [Arts funding tag](#).

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