

What was the

Artists Union?

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WHAT WAS THE ARTISTS' UNION?

A Sunday afternoon: two parents, concerned that their children have a broad education, have taken them to a contemporary Art exhibition in a gallery. They enjoy the experience and the children may even have been inspired by the show, which has cost them nothing. The artist, meanwhile, will probably have had to pay for the use of the gallery, while the visitors may well think that the artist has been paid to show their work. For it is work and artists need to eat, be clothed and housed, and if they wish, bring up children, whilst still working as artists. The gallery director and staff are paid but who pays the artist?

However, whenever a conversation takes place about the proposition that artists should receive remuneration for the work they do, a member of the general public is likely to recall a world-famous artist who never received any in their lifetime and that is supposed to be the end of the argument. In fact, the struggling artist was an innovation of the twentieth century and, before that, various forms of state funding were available, aristocratic patronage being effectively, state funding. This has long since died out. So has the nineteenth-century market provided by its newly-affluent bourgeoisie. However, there was a tremendous expansion in art college provision in the nineteen-sixties and questions began to be asked by some of the people going through the process about their position in British society and their possible means of making a living.

Artists began to take measures to help themselves. In 1969 artists, some of whom worked from studios in the old St Katherine's Dock before its development, named the 'I' Site, the first SPACE studios, established A.I.R. (Art Information Registry), an information service for the promotion of the arts from an office in Stepney Green. Its Registry constituted an artist's index containing information on artist's work, working techniques and material and of persons and organisations active in the arts. 'CATALYST', the first published registry and news sheet of activities from 1969 to 71 became AIRMAIL in 1972-3. The list was used by organisations all over Britain. The Registry offices were moved to Burlington House, home of the Arts Council, the organisation being funded by an Arts Council grant. Some of the same artists were involved in founding another self-help organisation in 1972, the Artists Union. (The Art Information Registry opened a gallery in October 1975 at 125/129 Shaftesbury Avenue but at the same time the Arts Council announced that the grant was not going to be increased).

TATE Archive has acquired most of the records of the national Artists Union which ran from 1972 until 1983. **This was the initial working paper:-**

THE ARTISTS UNION

After several meetings over a period of months, a commitment was made to the idea of an Artists Union affiliated to the TUC by a number of artists. The constitution of the Artists Union evolved from working party recommendations and at a subsequent meeting on Friday, May 19 a constitution was amended and ratified by artists which it is hoped will form the basis for a democratic structure capable of flexibility and which is completely responsive to the needs and demands of its members.

Full meetings of the Artists Union are held monthly at the union rooms, c/o Nash House, Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1 and the Artists Union welcomes and invites interested people and potential members to these meetings. The Artists Union bases its philosophy on positive commitment rather than passive acceptance.

The following workshops are at present meeting under the auspices of the Artists Union: Artists' Role in Society; Media; Art. Patronage, Marketing and Money; Government Policy for the Arts; Policy within the Trades Union Movement, The Artist in Education; Art, Science, Technology and Industry; Women in Art; Exhibitions. Workshops provide a structure through which the membership of the Union focuses on particular areas of concern. These workshops at present constitute a mechanism for the investigation in depth of these areas together with the assessment and formulation of principles, aims and strategies on issues of vital importance to the Arts and their relationship to western civilisation.

The workshops also meet regularly in the Artists Union rooms c/o Nash House and these meetings are completely open to all and anyone; members and non-members may make proposals or suggestions to be put before the full membership at the monthly Branch Meetings with the possibility of this becoming official union policy.

From these early meetings in the seminar room at the Institute of Contemporary Arts which was rent free, the union office moved, in September 1975, to the Shaftesbury Avenue premises of the Art Information Registry gallery and in 1979 to an office at the Rowntree Trust, 9, Poland Street W1, the London branch sharing the same offices. The London branch held regular monthly meetings and the Tate archive contains agendas and minutes of London branch meetings from mid-1973 to mid-1982. Expenses were paid to committee members who went to talk to encourage other branches to form. There was an AU representative to the Greater London Arts Association and some committee members undertook to visit members in different parts of London. An early newsletter in 1973 discussed entrance qualifications to art schools, loss of part-time jobs due to the absorption of art colleges into polytechnics and the great difficulties facing practising artists.

SAVE-ART CAMPAIGN
(in relation to Oxford College of Art)

In the early 1960's Diploma in Art and Design Courses (Dip.A.D.) were introduced after the recommendation of the Summerson Committee, in an attempt to form an academically acceptable degree-equivalent for Art. At about this time the Oxford School of Art was incorporated in the College of Technology on the present Polytechnic site. This provided the opportunity for developing advanced courses in Art and Design when the College of Technology was designated a Polytechnic. This opportunity has been missed; two attempts were made at gaining Dip.A.D. recognition in the 1960's, the first was inadequately prepared, the second failed largely because of internal politics - weakened because of disagreement over the independence of the School of Art within the College of Technology. Subsequent attempts have failed to get off the ground, because the art section has not been strengthened; no extra staff in art have been appointed despite the considerable expansion of the Polytechnic in other departments and overall, Art has been ignored. Oxford Polytechnic, together with Plymouth, is rushing headlong toward the unique position of being the only two Polytechnics without Art courses.

At present the Department of Design here runs four full-time courses: 1) College Diploma in Cartography

2) College Diploma in Book Publishing 3) College Diploma in Communication and Design 4) one year Foundation Studies Course.

There are plans to replace Cartography and Publishing by CNAA degree courses. The Communication and Design Course is being closed - there was no intake this year. The Foundation Course is to be transferred to the College of Further Education because it is government policy that non-advanced courses should not form part of Polytechnics. For the same reason all part-time, non-advanced courses in Art and Design at the Polytechnic are to leave. These part-time courses and the Foundation Course are the only ones in the Design Department which serve the local community - once again a Polytechnic cuts itself off from its community roots.

Degree courses only! Become mini-universities! The government wants a university education on the cheap. Do you?

What sort of education do you want here? Do you want one which excludes a whole area of our experience - the visual?

Art is essential, a vital part of a Polytechnic. But art education here must not be solely advanced courses in a department isolated from the rest of the College. It must serve everyone in the College. It must include part-time courses and serve the community. It must provide opportunities for studying fine art, design and applied art at all levels.

Make your voice heard now. Begin by helping to save Art.

Save Art Action Group

There were connections with other unions and community artists campaigns and attendance at conferences where they could be afforded on topics such as Art Law, a protest being launched at the cost of one on 'The Arts and the European Community'. A gradually more professional newsletter was produced by volunteers with membership subscriptions paying for printing and office rental with fund-raising events for single enterprises. The fund-raising events were certainly fun.

An example is the February 1976 newsletter (cover next page) which follows, as it discusses many of the issues:-

NEWSLETTER. FEBRUARY 1976.

This newsletter is fulfilling a dual function in providing some basic information for potential members, who have written to us as a result of the publicity campaign, and in reacquainting the membership with some of these facts.

First, however, there is the perennial question of "Why should there be an Artists Union? The idea appears less strange when it is realised that most of the other cultural workers in this country are already unionised, e.g. actors, writers and musicians. There are very successful artists unions in the Netherlands and Finland and similar organisations in the U.S.A., France and several other countries. Recently, in January 1975, the Federation of Artists in Scotland was formed and already has 200 members. In this country there are an estimated 2,000 practising artists. The vast majority of them are not able to support themselves by their work and are employed in other areas which are partially complementary to their abilities, e.g. education, whilst others are totally misemployed.

The Artists Union aims to establish the artists right to work - art is labour. It is not only the artists work which has value but the artist himself. Only in acting together can artists achieve this, demanding the reform of the existing means of patronage and establishing new ones (in a sense creating their own employers).

Brief History of the Union (This covers some of the main events in its 3+ years)

- May 1972 Union founded
- June 1973 Special Conference (at Imperial College) on Art Education organised in conjunction with the ATTI and NUS; preceded by a march and demonstration. And earlier a campaign tour of many major colleges.
- April 1974 Participated with the Dutch Artists union at the "Art theory, Politics and Practice" conference at the R.C.A.
- June 1974 Recommendations for the reform of the Arts Council drawn up and sent in by the membership in response to the Arts Council's survey. The recommendations were reprinted in the Arts Council's subsequent report.
- November 1974 "Culture in Crisis" - a delegate conference held at the I.C.A. to discuss patronage. Representatives from groups ranging between 'the performance centre', the 'writers action group' through to the 'Independent Theatre Council'. At this time Hugh Jenkins, the minister of the Arts, was met, and the shortcomings of the Arts Council were discussed with him.
- 1975 The AU moved from the ICA to new offices at 125/129 Shaftesbury Avenue, where AIR and SPACE also have their offices. Also in this year we made contact with a sympathetic lawyer who was prepared to draw up a new artists contract for us. The old one we had was based on the contract drawn up by the Art Workers Coalition in the U.S.A. and proved too cumbersome to be practical. He also offered to give legal advice to members (free up to the first £25). The union cannot afford at the moment to take him up on his generous offer. It is for matters like this that the A.U. urgently needs the strength and resources a growing membership provides.
- November 1975 Four members of the AU were among the delegation elected from the floor of a meeting of artists following the sacking of the staff of AIR and SPACE. This delegation carried out the first of the negotiations with the Council of Management, putting forward proposals for the democratisation of the whole organisation.

All through the union's history contact with other unions had been maintained not only with other artists' unions abroad but also with the labour movement in Great Britain. In fact the A.U. was initially formed as a potential branch of an existing union. Contact was made and information received from:

Equity (Actors)
Freelance branch of N.U.J. (National Union of Journalists)
ACTT (Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians)
ASTMS Assoc. of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs)
T&GWU (Transport and General Workers Union)
SOGAT (National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paper Workers)
TASS (Technical and Supervisory section of AUEW)
M.U. (Musicians Union)
SLADE (Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers and Engineers)

Summary

The Artists Union has gained a lot of experience in a short space of time in an uphill struggle. Many artists, as individuals, are trying to widen and change their audience and themselves - are looking at the relationships between their work and society. So it is only logical that they should begin to learn how to protect themselves by collective action.

The arbiters of artistic opinion in this country are not artists or society as a whole but at their worst are men like Frank Lloyd, director of Marlborough Fine Art: "When I saw it was going to be difficult to keep on selling 'important' art I had to go to living artists".

Joining the Union

Anyone joining must realise that the union has not established a power base and that it is at a formative stage. As has been said by members of the Patronage Workshop, the diversity of our membership should be celebrated - but the way to protect our very right to BE artists is to act together. Artists must have a voice in all matters affecting them and their work. If and when this principle is accepted by a significant number of artists, whatever their medium - performance, paint or film - then the A.U. will be an effective union.

Footnote

The union is run by the membership; decisions are reached at branch meetings held on the first Saturday of every month (except August). If you want any more information about particular areas of the Union's work please write and specify these concerns.

In 1973 there was a national membership campaign and subsequently branches formed in the North-West, South-West, Reading and Wessex, Yorkshire and the East Midlands. National conferences took place in Manchester (UMIST) in 1977, London 1978, Bristol 1979, London (Whitechapel Gallery) in 1980 and Nottingham in 1981.

The national committee consisted of members from all over the country and five publications were produced and distributed widely by the Librarian on request from colleges and universities, arts organisations including the English, Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils and International Arts Association, Tate Gallery, Arts Council Shop, the BBC, the Rainbow Arts Group, the Libraries and Arts services of borough councils and the T.U.C., the Artists Union branches as well as writers and individual members.

The publications were :-

1. 'Wages for Artists ? and other suggestions for improving the artist's situation', a discussion paper prepared for the first conference in Manchester.
2. 'The Patient and the Creative Arts', a report by Will Adams of A.U. N.E.C. on a conference organised by SHAPE in conjunction with King Edward's Hospital fund for London (the King's Fund Centre).
3. 'Why do Artists need a Union?' an account of a meeting of Artists held in Manchester on 9th May 1977 with a view to setting up an organisation in the North West. (Cover on the next page).
4. 'The Artists Union Response to the Labour Party Discussion Document on the Arts.'
5. 'The Donaldson Correspondence' which was the entire correspondence relating to the AU's request to the Minister of Arts, Lord Donaldson, to consider the very real problems of working artists with a view towards the urgent need for a code of practice in the visual arts.

Various posters were produced and a membership form with aims and objectives. A working party spent many months putting together the Artists Union Rules and Constitution which would be needed for application for TUC membership. It was felt that practitioners in the other arts had unions to represent them, such as Equity, the Musician's Union, the Theatre Writers' Union and the Writer's Guild and that other countries, such as France, Holland and Canada had much better arrangements concerning the livelihood and welfare of visual artists. The AU fought to establish the artist's right to exist as a worker with the production of art as their primary activity and without the necessity always to take other work unrelated or only vaguely related to their years of training.

The Artists Union National Executive committee met monthly from 1977 to 1981 and most of the minutes and agendas are now held in the archive.

One of the dangers facing the Union was high-lighted by the Secretary at the 4th Annual Conference...

THE AU AS A TRADE UNION

The final issue is that of the lack of similarity between the AU and other trade unions not least in relation to our aim to affiliate to the TUC. There is no doubting the fact that we already fulfil a function for artists which no other form of artists organisation might equal. Until we succeed in affiliating to the TUC however we will remain powerless and unable to provide adequate protection and representation of our membership. The last year has seen us tackle a vast amount of work, but it has been work done with tied hands and with inevitable compromises. The basis for membership is at present that of individuals not only lacking a shared employer, shared work place, common rates of pay or conditions of work but any other form of association other than their membership. The position of artists and artworkers is unique in relation to other working people in this country but despite this unless a situation evolves in which membership is through association of members apart from their union membership the function and nature of the AU is outside the definitions laid down by act of parliament for Trade union and the existence of the AU is reduced to that of an artists association or club.

But the fundamental issue was always resale rights. This is a form of copyright for artists, whereby the artist receives a percentage of the resale price when their work is sold on. Although standard practice on Mainland Europe, it is vigorously opposed by the Dealer Network in Britain. This report explains all...

VISUAL ARTISTS RIGHTS STEERING COMMITTEE & SUBSCRIBERS - Report

At a special meeting in December 1979, the AU National Executive Committee (NEC) resolved:

"That the NEC powers its national officers to proceed with all the necessary arrangements, and consultations, without prior commitment, in order to prepare for the establishment of a UK equivalent to the French SPADEM"

Why did the NEC decide to commit its slim reserves and personnel to establishing such a society?:

During 1979 Claude Picasso (President), Vladimir Duchemin (Director) and Nicole Laurent (Droits d'Auteur, Le chef de Departement), of the Societe de la Propriete Artistique et des Dessins et Modele (SPADEM), prepared the ground for the introduction of a visual artists rights collecting society. Since they introduced themselves to Roland Miller and myself at the ICA/EEC Conference (as reported last year) they subsequently held meetings with such organisations as the Arts Council, Artlaw and the Royal Academy. Finally, prompted by John Alexander Sinclair (Chairman, Arts Registration Committee) they courted the AU.

In early December ('79) Claude Picasso approached the AU to initiate the setting up of such a society. SPADEM's haste at this time was that the ground was ripe, they feared a collecting society **might** be started by a lobby of galleries, publishers and auctioneers, constituting a "pseudo" society with famous artists who depend on them, and thus the true aims of a UK SPADEM could well be frustrated, and the ensuing society would perhaps not uphold the tenets of the Confederation Internationale des Societes d'Auteurs et Compositeurs (CISAC), the umbrella 'body' for the separate collecting societies for the rights of composers, writers and artists, throughout the world.

The hub of the CISAC Constitution is that its member societies should comprise of 'authors', the French collective term for composers, writers and artists) and their heirs only, and that 60% of their respective boards of management must be 'authors'. In England the composers have the Performing Rights Society, and the writers have the recently formed authors Lending and Copyright Society (ALCS), but there is no such society for visual artists.

'Rights' in a work are financial and moral, and have been enshrined in law since the turn of the century. Financially, a UK society would collect the fees from copyright and reproduction, but not as yet Artist's Resale Royalties ARR or Droite de Suite) on behalf of its members. The Moral Right is one enjoyed by French artists - the artist, although selling a work, retains the moral right in it after a sale, which means the purchasers cannot alter, deface or destroy it.

UK artists are generally 'so grateful' to sell, show or have their work reproduced that they daren't pursue these rights (SPADEM have been collecting fees in this country for their French artists, for example from publishers for years). A collecting society would do it 'collectively' in the case of moral rights, could set precedents by taking action against an infringer.

It would not be in the interest of a pseudo collecting society (as above) to commit it self, in its constitution, to campaigning for the British Government to introduce ARR or Moral Rights and enshrine them in the law of this country.

On 3rd January 1980, at a meeting called by the AU, between SPADEM, the Arts Council of GB, Arts Registration Committee (ARC), Artlaw, the ALCS and ourselves, it was agreed that a steering committee be formed 'Visual Arts Rights Steering Committee' (VARSC), with myself as Convener. It was decided that: ALCS (observers), ARC, Artists General Benevolent Institution, Artlaw, Arts Council of GB, Association of Artists and Designers in Wales (AADW), AU, Crafts Council, Federation of British Artists, International Association of Art, Royal Academy, Royal Institute of British Architects, Royal Photographic Society of GB, Society of Industrial Artists and Designers and subsequently the Welsh Arts Council, (and further organisations will be pursued), be invited to be represented on the Steering Committee.

Next day, at the Artlaw Conference, Roland Miller gave a paper on Moral Rights of the artist, and also proposed a motion (seconded by John Alexander Sinclair) supporting in principle the establishment of the society, which was passed unanimously. On 7th January I was shown around the Paris offices of SPADEM, and took notes on the working of the different departments. On 20th June, Roland Miller representing the AU, and myself the VARSC, gave evidence in Brussels to the European Commission on ARR, which both the VARSC and the AU will have to fight for.

The ALCS kindly allowed us to use their Constitution (Memorandum and Articles of Association) for the basis of the VARSC draft.

Mem/Art/Ass and the AADW generously advanced £200 for the AU solicitor (in touch with the AADW solicitor) to prepare the draft.

These have now been agreed and the SPADEM solicitor has perused them with CISAC. When CISAC have formally accepted them, the procedure for establishing this non-profit making company will start, the first step of which is for 7 subscribers to sign the documents.

The Subscribers, VARSC and SPADEM, will be meeting later in October to discuss the composition of the board, and finance. By its nature the collecting society will be self-supporting, but SPADEM have agreed to advance finance to launch the embryo society, and VARSC have recommended that all money's so far spent by individuals and groups should be refunded by the society when launched.

The members of the future society will be individuals only, in all walks of visual life, as above, except where an organisation has become an heir of a particular artist, in which case the organisation will have one voice to represent that deceased artist. Incidentally, SPADEM divide their membership up into 3 sections:

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| "Section I | Graphic and Plastic Arts (painters, sculptors, engravers, designers, architects. . .) |
| Section II | Photography (illustrator photographers, reporter photographers, advertising & fashion photographers...) |
| Section III | Applied arts (art craftsmen, decorators, indoor architects, industrial aestheticians, creation officers, firms, or establishments)" |

The Steering Committee can only recommend details such as this, to those individuals who come together to form the first Board. It will then be for that Board to come to these initial decisions, and subsequently all decisions will be taken at Annual General Meetings of the new society.

May I offer many thanks to Roland Miller, for all his help and encouragement, and to Richard Mann, who on top of all his National Secretary work, has not only helped out, but also taken the minutes at all the VARSC meetings.

CHARLES GOSFORD September 1980.

The Report of the 4th Annual Conference is worth extracting at length, as this showed the strengths of the Union over the previous three years...

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT to the ARTISTS UNION
4th NATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1980

This year, again, the need for a strong AU to protect and promote the needs of artists has been clearly demonstrated. The Government have instituted cuts which have not been favourable to artists. This shows that even with a Minister for the Arts in the Cabinet, it is of little use without progressive policies. This was evidenced on several occasions when I and others were present to put the AU's case.

Artists stated publicly at the Artlaw Conference (Jan), that in order to make a living they were forced to live outside the law, especially concerning taxation. Tax experts, and officials, from the USA, Canada, and the UK, at the British American Arts Association seminar (April), on "Tax policy & private support for the arts", stated that governments control the arts through taxation; Neil MacFarlane, the Junior Arts Minister, opening the seminar, reaffirmed the Government's preference for business sponsorship. In the Vaizey unstarred question, in the House of Lords (June), "To draw HMG's attention to the difficulties facing young people training for a career in the arts", the Government's answer showed that contrary to the AU, NAFE & NUS points of view which I put, they would prefer to cling to their cuts policy which will affect art college courses, grants to art students, and the vital part time teaching by working artists and designers. Putting the case to the European Commission (June), Roland Miller, representing the AU, and myself representing the Visual Artists Rights Steering Committee (VARSC), learned that the UK is holding up harmonisation on Artists Resale Rights.

Nor can artists expect much from the Arts Council or Regional Arts Associations. The Arts Council finance department tell me that whereas in the mid '70s they could cover their costs, the current year their grant increase is about 2% which they feel is nowhere near inflation level. The Greater London Arts Association was rapped over the knuckles (Nov 1979) by the Arts Council for daring to promote a cuts campaign. And in a campaign led by the North West Branch (AU), the only non-commercial gallery in the Manchester area, the Peterloo, was closed, and a plea to Kenneth Robinson (Chair AC), went over like a lead balloon. The Arts Council, not only lacking in imagination and vision to save the Peterloo, at the time of writing I have been asked to write to the Chairman of the Visual Arts Panel of the AC, enquiring how such a provocative situation - 2 women on the panel out of 19, who chose an awards panel consisting of men only, who have short listed 40 artists, all of whom are men, for the current awards scheme, out of 675 applicants (of both sexes) could have arisen.

Nor do I think it insignificant, that after being interviewed for the BBC TV's two part programme on the Arts Council, the Director came up to me and said - "Good that is what I hoped you'd say". This AU contribution was axed from the final print.

An arts policy based on a few grants & prizes, from the Arts Council and private industry, is demeaning for artists. So we must look to ourselves, build a strong voice, and work with our friends in the labour movement. But although the Union has taken part in the cuts campaigns, and was invited to the TUC Bread & Roses rally/concert, we are still the only cultural body not represented in the TUC. To this end, as the NEC feel we cannot keep waiting for a Certificate of Independence, I have recently written to the TUC requesting a meeting to establish closer links. (The points raised in this letter should be discussed in the 'open' session of our Conference.)

However, in these bleak times, much has been done by the AU towards gaining a better future for artists, notably in two areas- 1. our liaison with the Association of Artists & Designers in Wales & 2. the decision to take the bull by the horns over the collecting society, (VARSC)- Also, Richard Mann has been in touch with the House of Commons Education, Science & Arts Committee, following the Vaizey debate & with recommendations from Paddy Goff (AU) the NEC initiated plans to form an Education Sub-Committee; we have met with the newly formed Australian Artworkers Union to whom Phil Rooke gave some tips from the early days of the AU, we held discussions with the International Association of Art; Conrad Atkinson arranged an interview with a Canadian journalist, where he related the first years of the AU's history & filled in the last few years - at this point I would specially like to thank Conrad, both from me personally in initiating me into the AU, and also for his contribution to the AU over the years; & we found strange bedfellows at a Society of Art Dealers meeting, where their Chairman suggested that an AU membership card, as Equity's is for an actor, could be proof of an artist as regards the Dept. of Employment.

One more outside situation I should mention before a quick word on internal mechanics of the Union. In the London Branch's fight to save some Camden studios for artists, & also in our campaign (thanks to Ghisha Koenig AU) to save Flaxman's studio for a sculpture centre & workshops in central London, it would be all too easy for AU to be caught in a hassle between the need for artists to live and work in studio space & a local community's need for housing. This should also be discussed in the 'open' debate at Conference.

Unfortunately two events this year have militated against the Union being as effective as it might have been - 1. with all these significant issues needing debate, it is a disaster that the AU JOURNAL was not printed, thus keeping our outlying members in the dark. For in the circumstances much work has been done by the AU, as is evidenced by the reports to Conference; 2. the failure of the AU to get a grant to pay for an administrative General Secretary to take over the day to day running of the AU, leaving officers & conveners, locally & nationally, to concentrate on policy, negotiations, & publicity. Events have shown that some centralisation would be advantageous to the Branches, for example, although the East Midlands Branch has collapsed through lack of personnel willing to take up local officers jobs, enquiries concerning membership in that area have increased. And here I must pay a special tribute to Ric Mann for his tireless work this year. His Secretaryship has been the pivot to holding the Union together. And a special thanks to Rosie Christmas (from North-West Branch), whose Vice-Chairwomanship has been a stable ear, not only to me personally, but also to the NEC, in times of stress.

Just to add a personal note as retiring Chair. On entering the AU in 1974, I knew little art politics. Working for the AU has helped discipline my erratic thoughts into more formal methods of being effective. My experience outside the Union during the same period, has shown me what is possible. I want to express thanks not only to those who have helped educate me, but to the Union itself which has schooled my thoughts from general frustration, to how I, as an individual artist, can start to work together with others to produce arguments to win our case.

CHARLES GOSFORD September 1980.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

My work as Secretary to the AU and the direction of my personal work have in *many* ways not been so far removed during the last year allowing me to make a regular commitment of time and energy to the tasks at hand. A more general guide to what that work has entailed was given in the article 'Union Life' which appeared *in* the emergency edition of the Journal, and to which members might refer.

More specifically, beyond the regular production of agendas minutes, writing and answering letters and such secretarial duties, I have attempted to keep in touch with a variety of union activities and those involved in the work. This has resulted in my acting as Secretary to the Visual Artists Rights Steering Committee, attendance at meetings between the AU and the International Association of Art, AADW, the Australian Art Workers and attendance of such events as the Artlaw Conference in January and Greater London Arts Association open meetings.

It must be noted that I have very much enjoyed the work and I wish to thank all those with whom I have been in regular contact for their enthusiasm and support throughout the year. Here I must especially mention Charlie Gosford, who has made himself available to discuss and pursue union work every day and any time, and also Joan Jonas of London Branch and Peter Dunn, London Branch rep. for their support and interest in the well being of the AU.

One of my special areas of interest throughout the year has been the internal organisation and well being of the Union and I am very pleased to see the number of motions to conference which deal with such questions. I feel in view of my years work I am justified in using this report as a platform from which to mention three issues which have affected my work during the year and which are likely to be discussed at conference.

SECRETARIAL HELP. Much of my time during the last year has been taken up with work for which I am not trained, for which efficient modern equipment was not to hand and which was difficult to fulfil working from several different locations and often outside working hours. This wasted time could well have been used to far greater benefit to the union if secretarial help was available. In view of the fact that last years Conference motion to appoint a General Secretary fell through it seems that it is essential that next year someone is found to do such work. This is no less the case because it is highly unlikely that anyone taking over the post of secretary will be able to devote the hours that my circumstances have allowed.

INTERNAL STRENGTH. My experience of the union at work is that its strength and vitality comes from a strong and vital executive acting on behalf of its membership. It is a format I have learned

to work within and it has proved to be very productive. The lack of real strength at branch level has been a source of concern, in fact their comparative weakness and the small part they have played in my work seems to reflect a special kind of weakness within our structure. New policy, union vitality, union activity should be that of the general membership. It is the needs and demands of our membership which arguably should be the prime mover. My work during the last year convinces me that the important work of next year must be to strengthen the branches. I hope that this conference proves to be an opportunity to question the very nature of the branches and to reach a better understanding of the function they fulfil and might fulfil in the future.

INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS REPORT. Sept 1980

I have been interested to know *what* the various artist's organisations *have* achieved in their own countries, what their problems have been and how they are trying to overcome them. What help, if any, have they been given by the State, how are they organised, when were they formed and what are their numbers.

Such information might encourage our members and even shame the powers-that-be into giving more consideration to the problems of the artist in Great Britain today. Contact with artists overseas can only benefit us, perhaps lead to us setting up a travel agency or international meetings abroad.

To assist me in this, I ask any AU member to forward me any publications, articles, items of interest, addresses, etc. These will be treated with care and returned. I am also anxious to interview AU members who have first hand knowledge of artists groups.

It is possible I will be travelling myself in Europe and U.S. this coming year. Through the information I have already gathered, I have some understanding of the situation in Canada, Australia and Holland. I also look forward to re-establishing AU contact with Finland, Bulgaria and the US. I have also been given contacts for Mexico and Poland.

It is too soon to make any kind of report. But one view begins to emerge. From Australia, which formed its union in 1979, on a Federal system....."Artists in Australia have no voice. We have no collective representation, therefore we have no say in what goes on, how and why it is organised, who it is organised for, or anything else..... any suggestions for reform must be premised on the existence of an artist's organisation," quoted from 'Don't moan, organise' by Ian Burn and Ian Milliss.

Canadian artists have a union called Canadian Artists' Representation -Le Front des Artistes Canadiens (CARFAC). This has recently celebrated its tenth year of operation. Divided into regions which are autonomous with an elected representative to the National Council which meets annually. This elects a three man executive to carry out its business. It functions through a central office, presently located in Winnipeg, and employs a secretary full time. Its journal has a circulation of 8,000 and is published quarterly. CARFAC has secured artist representation on gallery boards, and is strongly defensive of native Canadian artists' rights. It is involved in the formulation of public policy as regards federal agencies. It is financed through a grant from the Canada Council and membership fees on a per capita basis.

It has implemented a schedule of rental fees for artists, whenever their work is exhibited in any publically funded gallery. Fee varies, whether an international, national, regional exhibition, whether touring or not. The scale is 4,620 dollars down to a bottom figure of 20 dollars per picture. It publishes a blacklist of some commercial galleries who do not pay fees at all and a gray list of those who do in some cases.

RON CAINES BRISTOL

JOINT WORKING PARTY AU/AADW ON INLAND REVENUE AND DHSS REPORT 1980

To avoid confusion and facilitate working, IR and DHSS issues were considered separately. An Advisory Sheet on tax information for artists is being prepared. During the year the tax situation changed (improved) due to an agreement reached between the I.R. and the Arts Council. This concerns awards against tax liability (Sept. 1979.) In cases of persons employed as a Teacher because he is a working artist (as a job requirement), he should be able to claim some of his expenses against that income. Taxes paid according to the way you are employed and that is a contractual thing. In school you have contract, stamps, PAYE. But there are exceptional cases ie. Working for L.E.A. fulltime and paying schedule D. (As a possible test-case we could perhaps find a member willing to

be put on schedule D.) It is of benefit to be on schedule D as opposed to schedule E. This has always worked to the advantage of Equity members and Musicians and is their tax advantage. Yet they can register at the Department of Employment. Much to the concern of Equity which is fighting the case, the IR is moving at this moment to close tax loopholes and move actors and musicians from schedule D to schedule E, where it possibly can (ie staff musicians, Singers in Resident Orchestras on permanent contracts.) In practice the rate of tax is discretionary, negotiable with one's own tax inspector.

D.H.S.S. Present anomalies have roots in way the welfare state was set up. 15 different statutes, employment act, health act, etc. These provide guidelines which are applied by individual officers. It is thus open to change. For instance: in 1945 it was never envisaged that there would be a Professional Employment Register, or the slightest need for one.

Surprisingly, Equity have never negotiated directly with the dept. to obtain special status for members. Problems arising have always been settled in the courts, by case law.

This year Richard Batt, an artist working in Cardiff, was removed from the professional register after being on it for seven years. It was argued his skills had deteriorated after seven years...it was felt he would never obtain employment. AADW, with its own lawyer, attended the tribunal which returned a majority decision. (2 to 1. Verdict not unanimous therefore ground for appeal considered sound.) Further legal action would be expensive, the higher the case was fought. An appeal fund would be necessary. The Tribunal was disturbing in that a special case can be made 'in special circumstances' for almost anything. But the case that artists are by the nature of their work and lives special was made and the Tribunal by their verdict went some way to acknowledging this.

Since this case, the working party have been told the Professional Executive Register does have category artist - not commercial or display. Acceptance is "discretionary"...two "A" levels, evidence of exhibitions, membership of an artists organisation possibly. Category ref. no 16110K. The normal labour exchange has ten categories of artist:

CAPTION A.
COMMERCIAL A
DISPLAY A
FASHION A.
GRAPHIC. A.
LITHOGRAPHIC A.
MAKEUP A.
POTTERY A.
TECHNICAL A.
UNSPECIFIED A.

"The painter would be placed in graphic artist category...One who makes art, studio artists, creates pictures, abstract designs, portrait painter, watercolourist." We need to resolve employed/self employed dilemma. Who is our employer? We need to know.

How many artists are on the Dole/have been forced off the dole? Will someone sign on as a test case...if we can register as artist, available for work, do we therefore qualify as a consequence to be members of the T.U.C.?

ARTISTS IN BOROUGHES.

Artists working outside the gallery system have basically three options 1) find 'money work' to subsidise your art 2) Get lucky with the Arts Council or your Regional Arts Association 3) find a friendly community which values your skills and will pay you for using them. The last of these sounds a bit like something from that Golden Age when artists were invaluable to the community, (or was it its rulers?) in giving significance to its past and vision to its future - usually of the 'be good or it's everlasting damnation' kind. That's the trouble; those who employ us usually have a vested interest. And anyway, the shift from labour-intensive to capital intensive production has marginalised us even in this, replacing the individual artists with increasingly centralised media networks - the 'culture factories' of monopoly capitalism. There are of course the odd tokens, various placements of artists in industry, in planning offices, Town Artists etc. But these are often cosmetic activities and you can bet that as soon as the artist gets close to significant expression which conflicts with the status quo, then its bye bye. However there are other possibilities. How about an arts committee open to anyone in the borough - anyone can stand for election - which has a substantial budget (increasing yearly by over 50% even in these hard times)

for funding a wide range of cultural and arts activities. It is not controlled by anyone outside its elected body - either local authority, commercial interests or Arts Council etc - and is not afraid to fund work which challenges the status quo from time to time. Sounds like a dream? Well it's not, it exists (which means it also has problems) and I am using it as a 'model', or at least a starting point, to determine possibilities for a realistic approach to funding artists in boroughs - one which is not based upon a crude functionalism or an ineffectual tokenism. I will elaborate at conference.

Peter Dunn Sept 1980

**REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON THE
BRITISH COPYRIGHT COUNCIL**

Roland Miller, Artists Union representative.

Since the British Copyright Council approved the Artists Union application to join the British Copyright Council on July 18th 1979, the Union has become heavily involved in the field of copyright and associated rights, especially in the European context. It is in this area of concern that I think the value of our membership of the BCC lies.

The membership of the BCC (27 bodies at the last count) is constituted approximately of 50% organisations like ourselves, eg representing the actual producers of a creative work - writers, musicians, photographers, designers. The following unions are represented; ACTT, Equity, Musicians Union, NUJ, the Writers Guild. Also represented are bodies such as the Publishers Association, the Association of Authors Agents and Music Publishers Association. It is interesting to note that no comparable bodies in the exclusive field of the visual arts are members of the BCC, so that for the moment the visual arts are represented by their own associations, rather than by interests of those who handle the work of visual artists in a commercial sense. Should legislation be eventually passed in Great Britain that puts visual artists in the same protected category as the musicians', actors', journalists' and other writers' output (all of which is protected by legislation enforceable by collecting societies against exploitation or resale or redistribution, then I think we could expect bodies representing art dealers, auctioneers and gallery owners to become very interested in membership of a body such as the BCC.

It is clear to anyone who considers the way composers collect rewards for their work, that bodies such as the Music Publishers Association are essential to the chasing up of money due from the dissemination of 'music' in sheet form. In a recent (June 80) court hearing the MPA successfully sued Wolverhampton Corporation because schools in the Corporations Education system had been using photocopies of sheet music illegally, and in breach of the Code of Practice relating to photocopying, the counsel for the MPA said in court:

"Since the advent of the photocopying machine, the Association had been concerned about protecting its members rights, on which the living of the composers, writers and music arrangers depend. Unless music users behave fairly, publishers would cease to be able to publish and pay royalties. Composers and others would no longer be able to make a living."

If visual artists are ever to have a serious chance of earning a living in the way that composers may, then I believe they will need this sort of protection. The apparently meagre results of our involvement with bodies such as the BCC must be set against the long-term strategy, which is tied up with the setting up of a visual artists rights collecting society similar to the Authors' Lending and Copyright Society Ltd - which is also a member of the BCC. It seems unlikely that any body similar to the Music Publishers' Association will emerge to champion the rights of artists.

NOTE: other 'art' bodies on the BCC:
Association of Illustrators
Institute of Incorporated Photographers
Royal Academy of Arts
Society of Industrial Artists and Designers.

THE DRAFT EXHIBITION AGREEMENT

The draft agreement was completed by the Working Party last December, and approved after discussion by the N.E.C. in January.

It is based on arrangements made by Wessex Branch members with Reading Municipal Art Gallery for an exhibition held last year. It is essentially an agreement designed for the public gallery,

where artists exhibit primarily for prestige reasons rather than actual picture sales.

Outside the public sector there is a vast range of private or semi-private exhibition spaces - the gallery in Central London, which may deal with only a very small number of artists on individual contracts, then up and down the country the very wide range of private galleries operate at a very modest level with varying success. A number of these are run as non-profit-making trusts, and of these some receive occasional support from RAAs or private charities. At the bottom of the range there is the gallery run on a shoestring and with very low overheads on a semi-amateur basis - these in fact are often run by artists themselves as a sideline.

Many of these galleries are well run and provide the artist with quite a good livelihood, by direct sales, but in some instances the business methods and general inefficiency of others provide the unwary artists with many pitfalls. Certainly the mutual price agreement on any exhibition is vital, and somewhat similar clauses as in the 'public galleries' draft, could be drawn up for each individual case, but the extraordinary variety in the private field makes it difficult to envisage a single contract that could cover comprehensively all situations adequately. However I hope that AU will study these questions. With wider experience (and better resources) we could eventually offer an advice service to artists seeking ANY outlet to the public for his work. This would be our most valuable contribution to improving the standing of the independent artist in this community.

CHRISTOPHER HALL.

Report from the East Midlands Branch, Artists Union - from Roland Miller

The branch was founded on November 22nd 1978 as a result of canvassed interest amongst artists and *others in* and around Nottingham, Loughborough, and parts of Lincolnshire.

Initial meetings were promising, but the loss of the Secretary (on moving out *of* the region) was a setback because there have never been more than three people in the branch willing to take on the responsibilities of Officers' positions.

In the summer of 1979 an exhibition was mounted by invitation of the Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham. (The Gallery and its 'arts centre' facilities have provided a good base for the branch since its inception). No enthusiasm was evident for an exhibition of members' work, instead Shirley Cameron and I assembled a documentary display explaining the Union's work and advertising the branch activities. There was a good response in a visitors' book, which produced several interested enquiries about membership. The exhibition consisted of three handlettered panels and eighty slides, projected in continuous sequence (The material is, incidentally, available for use by other branches).

In October 1979 the branch entertained two members of the Polish artists' and film union, at Cotes Mill, Loughborough. This meeting and social event was a considerable success. However the subsequent resignation of the branch's (second) Secretary was a downer.

Since April 1979, when the Sheffield branch voted itself out of existence, the East Midlands branch has included members of the Sheffield branch, the boundaries of the branch are, effectively: Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Humberside, South Yorkshire.

The branch exists at present as a list of names & addresses, from which -
13 are actual members, (officers - Chair/Secretary & Treasurer)
10 have shown interest in one way or another,
5 have indicated intentions of coming to meetings, etc., but have never actually shown up.
28 total potential membership

The consensus amongst people I have talked to about the branch is that it needs either a real policy and practical possibility of exhibiting work, or a social function - arranging meetings such as the one held at Cotes Mill, October '79. There is, frankly, no interest in the Trade Union function, unless a local issue (at present there are none) turns up that a Union could solve. However there is no chance of an AU presence being taken seriously in this region at the moment.

Roland Miller (Chair, acting Secretary) 21.09.80

BRANCH REPORT: LONDON

Peter Dunn Sept 1980

London Branch activities have been somewhat patchy this year due to the fact that our most energetic newcomers have a habit of being poached by the NEC - a veritable vampire of our new blood. Despite these setbacks however we have been active in such matters as the Battersea Mural and the threats to Flaxman's house and Camden Studios. We also ran a successful season of 'open evenings' where we invited members to discuss their work and also take up such themes as Censorship, Art Criticism, Funding, Art and the Media which featured such speakers as Andrew Brighton, Richard Cork, Peter Fuller and many others. These served the dual purpose of introducing outsiders to the union, the kinds of issues and debates we are involved in etc., and also allowed the membership to examine such issues in a great deal more depth than can possibly be achieved during the 'business' of a branch meeting. They proved to be a source of stimulation and of new members at the same time. The summer has proved to be rather an inactive time for the branch partly due to holidays and a lack of organisation due to the factors mentioned above, but we seem to have found *our* feet again now and are in the process of lining up a new season of open evenings for the autumn as well as planning new strategies for publicity and a reorganisation of Branch meetings to include at least one hours' open debate upon fundamental questions which are of concern to us, both as artists and as union members.

READING BRANCH REPORT. CHRIS HALL SEPT ' 80.

The branch has operated with mixed success during the year. The main event was an exhibition of members work at the Reading Municipal Art Gallery which later travelled to the Towner Art Gallery Eastbourne. This kind of activity is the main interest of members.

Membership and attendance at events has fluctuated considerably, with several principal members leaving the area. A number of new members have recently joined.

BRANCH REPORT FROM SOUTH WEST

In the summer of 1979 the branch was invited to mount an exhibition in the city docks area as part of Bristols' Wine Festival. We obtained new members as a result. The work was seen by thousands of people in a non-gallery environment. There was no selection and this led to complaints about standards afterwards. For this exhibition a small payment was made by the council which we considered a good precedent. (Note, complaints were by members.)

With some of the money received a Slide box was built and installed in the foyer of Bristol arts centre. This holds about 100 slides. This was in response to members' wishes. The branch is supposed to be responsible for what is displayed. The branch meets on the first Monday of every month at the art centre. Next year it is to close and a very swish new one built opposite the Arnolfini Gallery. Art and commerce will walk hand in hand into the sunset. As things go up market more than a few people in Bristol are feeling uneasy.

In an effort to raise funds, the branch is hoping to publish a series of post cards .We are presently considering two designs. Please send designs to the South West. (Black & white.)

This year the branch mounted a summer exhibition of a different kind. We approached the directors of the Arts Centre and Arnolfini Galleries who agreed to show work by members. A joint show was thus mounted in which art work was not preselected by administrators, but chosen by the artists themselves. In the end, slight adjustments were made but every artist submitting work was shown. This was considered a useful exercise. (The trouble with 'Artists Union' exhibitions - you can set yourself up for criticism.) We wish to thank those members living around the country who sent work and to Roland Miller and Shirley Cameron who gave performances at both galleries. Many people saw the show and artists union literature sold and displayed.

The Art Centre, 583 Fishponds Rd, has agreed to give a ten percent discount on all materials purchased by union members, on production of a membership card. This is considered to be a good benefit for members and an incentive to join the union.

The branch has become an affiliated member of the Avon Resource Centre. AU members can now make use of its facilities (printing at cost of materials only, advice, etc).

Present membership is around 35. (Gulbenkian says there are 300 professional artists living in Bristol.. Many have other jobs eg teachers.) Joining A.U. is only the first step. There are doubts and problems to be overcome. "How can we be a union - who is our employer?" "Are we not Self-employed?" Art reaches so many other occupations...affiliation may require an act of imagination on the part of both artists and the TUC. We are still misrepresented as self-indulgent, self-glorifyingly offering genius for investment purposes.

(Come to think of it how many millions of people receive money directly from the govt. in salary or benefit. Don't we need artists as well as traffic wardens?).

On top of all this, we in the South West have the problems afflicting artists in the regions. In Bristol, one of the most heavily subsidised art cities in Britain the local artist is made to feel that his work is unimportant. He is a million miles from the swinging International Art-scene. Arts Council galleries are strictly for high-flyers so get hip.

As the 1980's proceeded, the political and social climate ran against even those unions with much larger memberships, more influence and more resources. A fundamental weakness was that the members lacked leverage. While striking performers can affect the economics of capital-intensive performance space, no one would notice if creative artists went on strike.

The current Chair and Vice Chair stepped down and an attempt to fund a paid officer (David Logan) failed. It became increasingly difficult to run the union and produce regular journals with voluntary effort. As an original member of the Union and its Librarian from January 1978, I am donating the extensive records which I preserved to the new archive at the Tate. By doing so, I hope to revive interest in the numerous areas of concern of the original members, make the material generally available for study and perhaps renew contact with those members.

AVIS SALTSMAN. Artist and printmaker. ARTISTS UNION LIBRARIAN