

## Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts - Context Document

### Background

The RHA is a Chartered Body created in 1823 *"For the better cultivation and advancement of the Fine Arts in Ireland"* The original body consisted of 15 members, and this was amended in a revised Charter in 1867 to 30 members and 10 associate members. An Amendment of Charter Bill was taken to the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2023 and in December 2023 this act was passed, allowing for 55 members and 10 associates.

The business of the Academy is conducted by the Council of the Academy, which consists of four officers - The President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Keeper - and six ordinary members of the Academy. The Council meets monthly. The full membership of the Academy meets quarterly. These Assembly meetings review the business of the Council and decide on any institutional matters.

The Academy operates under a set of Byelaws which are agreed by the Membership by adoption at the Assembly. There is a major review of Byelaws underway with the aim of presenting them to the Assembly for consideration and adoption in the second half of 2025.

Since 2000, the RHA has constituted a number of Advisory Boards to widen the expertise and reach of the Academy by the appointment of members from all walks of life. The current Advisory Board are two; the Programme Board responsible for the exhibition, education, marketing and friends schemes; and the School Board responsible for all aspects of the RHA School and Studio programmes. Advisory Boards aims to operate under best practice rules of rotation, diversity.



## **Institutional Context**

The RHA occupies a bespoke building in the centre of Dublin city. Designed in 1972, partially completed in 1988 the RHA Gallagher Gallery underwent a major €10m refurbishment in 2007. It has five gallery spaces, the largest which is 600sq.m, a school facility which is accredited by TU, Dublin and five non-residential studio spaces.

Contemporary Art in Dublin is presented by the Irish Museum of Contemporary Art - IMMA, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Temple Bar Galleries and Studios and a number of smaller publicly funded spaces such as The Lab (municipal) and Project Arts Centre. The National Gallery of Ireland features some contemporary work from time to time. There is a lively 'artist-run space' scene in Dublin and a small and solid commercial gallery sector.

The RHA is unique amongst its peers in support and presentation of contemporary Irish artists through all stages of their career – emerging, established and senior. From time to time the RHA contextualises this concentration with projects and exhibitions from international artists.

Though not a national institution the RHA's remit is national in aspiration with 50% of its core artist membership coming from outside of Dublin. Its exhibition programme is drawn from artists from every region and its exhibitions regularly travel to regional centres.

The RHA has originated and presented projects abroad in the US, Europe and Africa. The RHA is a member of the European Alliance of Academy based in the Akademie Der Kunste, Berlin.

The RHA hosts its Annual Exhibition each year from May through to August. Now in its 195<sup>th</sup> year the Annual exhibition comprises of works from members, a small invited artist section and an open call process which attracts more than 4000 entries from which 350 approx. are selected. The RHA Annual exhibition is a function of the members of the RHA who select



the exhibition, oversee its installation and accompanying publication. This is a selling exhibition which transacts more than €850k worth of sales.

The RHA is an artist-owned and operated organisation in receipt of public funds from the Arts Council of Ireland, which contributes about 40% of its annual revenue budget.

Approximately 30% of its other revenue comes from sales in the Annual Exhibition and the remainder from the various fundraising initiatives.

### **The Directorship**

The RHA is an artist-owned, artist-oriented organisation. Managing the RHA requires creating consensus amongst various different stakeholders, the primary being the Academy itself, its Officers, Council and Assembly. There are concentric circles of support around the RHA from core support by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, to its Advisory Boards, through to its major patrons - individual and corporate - to its Friends and visitors. The Director must work delicately with the organs of the Academy, balancing initiative and suggestion from one body to the other.

The Director of the RHA is its artistic director and currently reports to the Programme Board. The Director supports artists at all stages of their career through solo exhibitions, thematic group exhibitions and through an active studio visiting programme. The exhibition programme extends the Academy's influence beyond its membership and negates any danger of accusations of preferential treatment of members.

The Director of the RHA supervises a staff of twelve in conducting the day-to-day business of the Academy in their various areas of expertise, ie. public engagement, curatorial, marketing, development, registrar.

The Director of the RHA creates the planning estimates for revenue and expenditure and composes the draft budgets for all activities of the Academy's programme.



The Director oversees the maintenance and repair of RHA property.

The Director composes and writes the annual grant submission to the Arts Council via its Strategically Funded Organisations Programme.

The Director works with the Officers alongside the RHA's HR consultants on all matters pertaining to personnel.

The RHA School and Studio Programme is set, managed and supervised by the Head Of School who reports to the Director on matters of finance, budgeting and personnel.

The Director of the RHA represents the Academy at national and international forums.

Currently the RHA has an annual budget is circa €1,500,000

