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# Annual Report 2023

**VISUAL  
ARTS  
SOUTH WEST**

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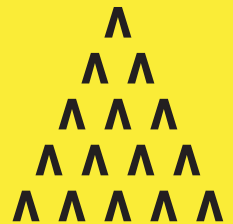
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# Introduction



# About VASW

Visual Arts South West (VASW) is a sector support organisation. Our role is to advocate for people in the visual arts, to connect artistic communities, raise visibility, campaign for diversity, and build resilience to enable the South West visual arts sector to thrive.

We have three core aims that guide our work,

- **To increase recognition of the value of the visual arts**
- **To achieve a more sustainable, supportive, resilient and interconnected sector**
- **To address structural and systemic issues in the sector**

We work in the South West region of England, covering Cornwall, Devon, Bristol, Bath, Somerset, Gloucester and Hampshire – from the Isle of Wight to the Isles of Scilly.

We believe in collaboration and strive for an art world that is inclusive for all.





SPIKE ISLAND STUDIOHOLDER PHOTO: MARTIN PARR

## Our Funding

VASW is supported through Spike Island's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England, however we are a separate organisation. Visual Arts South West CIC was incorporated in 2002 and consists of a Steering Group and two co-Chairs.

The support we receive through Spike Island's NPO funding (£30,552 annually) goes towards some of our core costs; including an essential part-time staffing structure, basic website maintenance, Steering Group expenses, membership to marketing and communications platforms, and accountancy fees.

With core funding in place, we are able to:

- **Develop strategic partnership programmes**
- **Apply for funding to benefit regional sector development**
- **Maintain a website platform for information, advocacy and knowledge exchange; including a Directory, What's On, Editorial and Resources**
- **Share opportunities and news through our social media and monthly newsletters**
- **Manage our finances and accounting**
- **Maintain and work with our Steering Group and Chairs**

# What We Do

We seek to create spaces for dialogue and exchange where diverse voices are platformed and free speech is protected. To consider and share experiences, we have worked with groups of individuals from across the region, and directly shape our work in response to research and feedback. You can find out more about this on page 26.

We want to see sustainable and progressive change in the South West; our vision is for justice, inclusion, success and celebration for all across the visual arts. To achieve this vision, we fundraise for new programmes that support the development of the sector. You can learn more about our programme on page 13.

As we prepare to apply to different funders in 2024, we are aware that a successful application directly impacts other organisations and initiatives in the region, some of whom are not in a position to apply to funding bodies themselves. Our priority is collaboration and partnership; to bring investment to the region and support others to deliver work



# The VASW Team

VASW's part-time team is funded through Spike Island's NPO and project funding.



**Paula Orrell**  
Network Manager

Responsible for leading on organisational development, partnerships and overall delivery



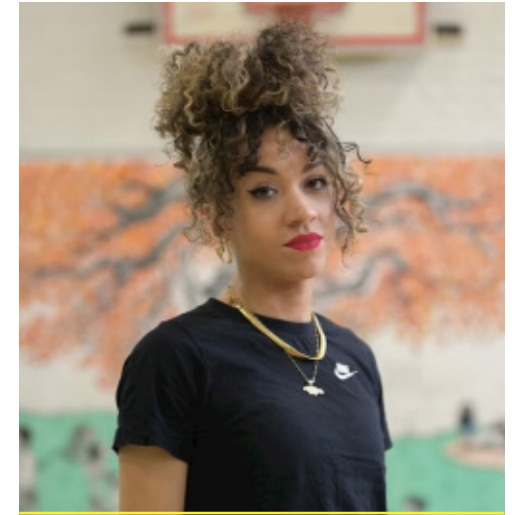
**Hannah Rose**  
Sector Support Manager  
(Regional)

Responsible for developing region wide partnerships, initiatives and support



**Lucy Badrocke**  
Sector Support Manager  
(WEVAA)

Responsible for development and delivery of the WEVAA programme



**Jasmine Thompson**  
Administrator

Responsible for social media/marketing and organisational administration

## Steering Group

The VASW team work closely with a Steering Group to guide development and ensure accountability and good practice. The Chairs and members of the Steering Group who represent organisations give their time voluntarily. We offer a stipend to freelance practitioners who attend meetings.

### Co-Chairs



**Woodrow Kernohan**  
Director of  
John Hansard Gallery



**Helen Cammock**  
Artist



Steering Group Members



**Abbi Bayliss**  
Artist and illustrator



**Yasmin Joan Qureshi**  
Artist



**Amanda Lynch**  
Artist, curator and researcher



**Melanie Stidolph**  
Curator Public Programme  
at Tate St Ives



**Erika Cann**  
Artist



**Laura Hopes**  
Artist



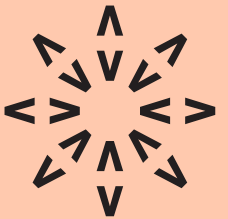
**Rocca Holly-Nambi**  
Cultural Producer and  
Director of b-side



**Georgia Newman**  
Deputy Executive Director,  
The Island Collection

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# Highlights



# Network Manager's Reflection

The South West is a wonderful place to live and work. Phenomenal artists are making outstanding work, incredible individuals are driving change, and innovative organisations are working to strengthen communities and embed the idea that culture is essential.

Both in the midst of and since the pandemic, we've seen major cultural organisations in the region open their doors. These include The Box in Plymouth and East Quay Watchet in North Somerset. More recently, Gray's Wharf (Art Centre Penryn) in Cornwall and Studio Kind in North Devon have relocated and boosted the ambition of their programmes.

In 2023, we enjoyed going to brilliant events and conferences: Flamm in Cornwall, OSR Projects' seminar *Into Another Intensity* in Somerset, THIS LAND by b-side Festival in Portland, and *Co-Creating Public Space: How Can We Thrive?* by Up Projects in Southampton. There's so much more to celebrate than we can cover here, demonstrated by the incredible listings featured in our website Directory.



CORE, ABIGAIL REYNOLDS, 2023. COMMISSIONED BY FLAMM. PHOTO NICK COONEY



THIS LAND, B-SIDE FESTIVAL 2023. PHOTO PAUL BOX

VASW is committed to creating better conditions for artists and art workers and working in partnership whenever possible. As a lead organisation with Spike Island delivering on visual arts infrastructure projects, we're growing our understanding of the role we can play for artists and art workers. Working strategically across the South West has enabled us to support and sustain artists, collectives, studios and careers. We also encouraged a great new team to join the organisation, supported by an inclusive cultures approach to diversifying the Steering Group. Our work is facilitated by knowledgeable professionals from across the region who give their time to reflect on what makes an area exciting from a visual arts perspective.

We thank everyone who has participated, engaged and supported our work. There is much more to do, but we can create a great ecosystem through partnership and a shared vision.

Paula Orrell is VASW Network Manager and the National Director of the Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) England.

# Our Programme and Impact

## The West of England Visual Arts Alliance

As a partner in the West of England Visual Arts Alliance (WEVAA), we work with Spike Island, Bath Spa University School of Art, Bristol City Council, The Brunswick Club, Creative Youth Network, Super Culture, North Somerset Council and the University of the West of England.

Since 2021, partners have delivered a programme of activity with the aim of supporting visual arts progression in the region, with the collective vision for the visual arts community to become more progressive, sustainable and inclusive.

The programme provides critical opportunities and support to enable artists, curators and young people to develop their careers and achieve their potential. It prioritises the participation of artists and arts workers who experience barriers, along with those who challenge the role of the art world and make space for collective resistance.

The alliance collectively advocates for the visual arts in the context of the region's strategic development. WEVAA aims to demonstrate the impact of the visual arts on regeneration, wellbeing, and economic and community development.

WEVAA is supported by Arts Council England through the Supporting Visual Arts Progression in Bristol and the West of England fund, and responds to the recommendations of the Bristol Visual Arts Review which was commissioned in 2017.

The WEVAA programme comes to an end in August 2024, at which point VASW will have delivered:

- > **Nine Research and Development Fellowships**
- > **40 Research and Development Bursaries**
- > **An Online Professional Development Programme**

## Research and Development Fellowships

Research and Development Fellowships have been awarded to artists and arts workers to develop projects that contribute to and develop the broader visual arts community. Each Fellow receives £10,000 of support; the format is open and practice led.

*As a group of artists, our approach to the fellowship has been to embrace the opportunity, be curious, and support each other in a shared learning experience. The fellowship has given us the time and space to discuss, question and deepen our understanding of our work as a collective. Through our research, we have met with other groups and organisations, which has helped us explore what makes AIM unique while considering new approaches we might adopt in the future.*

**Colin higginson, director art in motion (aim)**



## Year One Fellows

### **Art In Motion (AIM)**

A not-for-profit participatory arts organisation that provides support and opportunities for a growing community of neurodivergent and learning-disabled artists to develop their artwork.

### **Bath Art Depot (BAD)**

A collective of artists, architects and artist-educators who are developing plans for an arts and cultural hub for Bath.

*The Fellowship supported us to organise the events that were needed to reach out into some of the least accessible communities in the city. We've found the whole experience really useful. Engaging with the wider public forced us to focus our intentions and gave a clearer voice to our ambitions.*

**Bath Art Depot**

### **Lucy Badrocke**

A curator and producer working with the community of Easton and Lawrence Hill to develop arts and cultural activity.

## Year Two Fellows

### **Kat Anderson**

A visual artist, musician and filmmaker developing a project that considers the effect of trauma on the voice of Black womxn.

### **Music to Come**

An artist-run platform for experimental sound and music working collectively to produce projects, events, collaborations and tours.

### **Weston Artspace**

A socially-engaged organisation and hub for the creative community in Weston-super-Mare.

*This has been a great opportunity to develop the space and volunteer roles. It has connected new communities and raised our profile in the public realm.*

**Zara Sheppard, Manager of Weston Artspace**



HOUSE OF WEAVING SONGS, DHAQAN COLLECTIVE (2023). PHOTO LUKE O'DONOVAN

## Year Three Fellows

### **Bristol Refugee Artist Collective (BRAC)**

A group of 15 artists from different countries, cultures and languages furthering their practice as emerging artists, entrepreneurs, community activists and leaders.

### **dhaqan collective**

A feminist art collective of Somali women, centring the voices of women and elders, and privileging co-creation and collaboration through craft and weaving.

### **Rachael Clerke**

Artist, organiser and CEO Art Business Ltd, a playful container for art and art-adjacent activities that asks if art can do business, and if a business can be art.



## Research and Development Bursaries

To enable a step change in career development, bursaries of between £500 and £1000 have supported research, production, exhibitions, mentoring, residencies and travel to places such as Dublin, Hamburg, Athens and Bethany, Oklahoma.

Projects have included a fictional football club and a series of AR sculptural interventions, and artists have learnt new skills including Japanese woodcut, 3D printing, motion graphics and live drawing.

### Year One Bursary Holders

Alex Farines, Ama Dogbe, Ben Hartley, Cliff Andrade, Finn Dovey, Genevieve Davis, Isaac Stacey, Jonathan Kelham, Katy Connor, Rhona Iris, Sam Francis, Samantha Harvey and Veronica Vickery.

*Thank you for placing your trust in me in the first place and enabling me to punch high and test out new things.*

**Alex Farines**

### Year Two Bursary Holders

Beth Luxton, Bo Lanyon, Brian Gibson, Bryony Gillard, Camille Aubry, Belovitch, Frances Willoughby, Jade Ayino, Lydia Halcrow, Nigel Goldsmith, Olivia Brelsford-Massey, Ruth Ander, Steve Dutton and Vicky Smith.

*I'm so grateful for the opportunity! I've not been able to financially invest in my practice this much before, so it has been truly beneficial and significant to me.*

**Olivia Brelsford-Massey**

### Year Three Bursary Holders

Dylan Barker, Vera Boele-Keimer, Harriet Bowman, Kelsey Cruz-Martin, Eleanor Duffin, Daisy Hvnter, Natalie Hyacinth, Jamie Lee, Kate McDonnell, Carol Sherman, Oliver Sutherland, Sharne Tasney and Skye Turner.

*The residency was absolutely amazing and I am still processing all my research and work. I have had a really productive time and made new work, developing my ideas about weaving, painting and surface.*

**Vera Boele-Keimer**

## Online Professional Development Programme

Our online programme supports key skills development, from fundraising and art writing to community resistance. It includes workshops, seminars, mentoring, talks, resources and guest curated seasons led by inspiring practitioners such as Can Altay, Benjamin Cook, Dr Cara Courage, dhaqan collective, Janine Francois, Gaylene Gould, Ceri Hand, Amal Khalaf, Migrants in Culture, Saziso Phiri, Christina Poulton, Sepideh Rahaa and Victoria Udondian.

*All in all, these workshops are amazing and I can't rate them enough!*

Programme participant

In 2023, we delivered and commissioned:

- ▶ **Eight workshops with 148 participants**
- ▶ **21 individual 121 sessions**
- ▶ **46 on-demand training opportunities**
- ▶ **A guest curated season**
- ▶ **Seven new resources**
- ▶ **Seven editorial features**

You can read more about the programme and find commissioned resources and editorial on our website:

[vasw.org.uk/professional-development](https://vasw.org.uk/professional-development)



## The WEVAA Partnership

WEVAA has also supported the alliance partners to deliver ambitious visual arts activity and drive the region's strategic development.

### Artist Commissions

In 2023, Spike Island's commissions and exhibitions included ambitious public presentations by Flo Brooks, Asmaa Jama, Ayo Akingbade and Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Engagement projects included a commission by Rachal Bradley and young people from Creative Youth Network's Creative Futures Programme; and Jack Young, who worked with teenagers from Hartcliffe Club for Young People.

The Brunswick Club have focused on artists, artist-led and collective working. Commissions included projects by Donald Harding and Shirley Pegna.

## Strategic Development

Bristol City Council (BCC) are developing a Cultural Infrastructure Plan (CIP) for Bristol, involving multiple council departments to enable relationships with key stakeholders across the city.

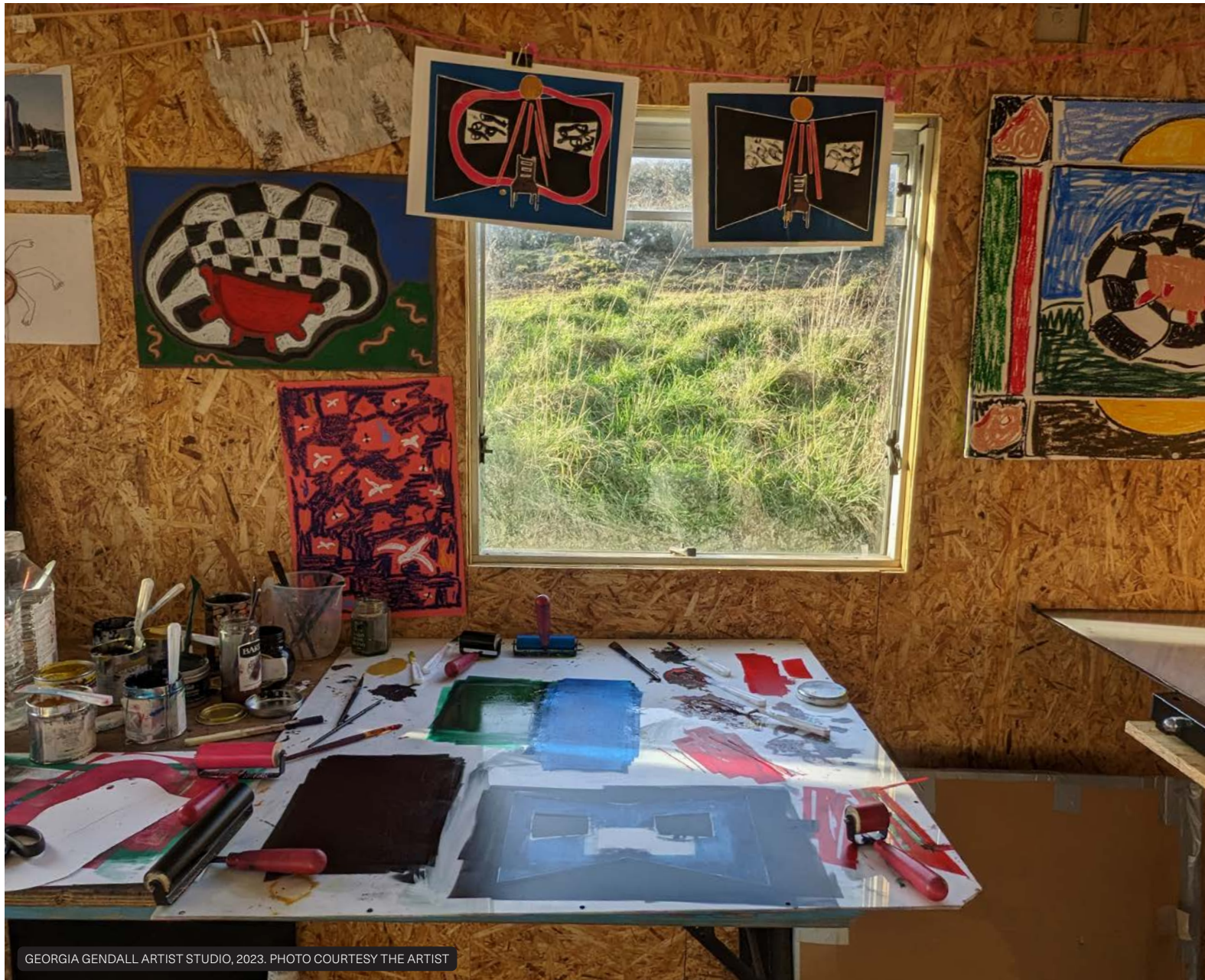
Bath Spa University has developed a cultural roadmap with the aim of making the university a focal point for the visual arts community.

Super Culture launched an early career bursaries programme and began a consultation to inform a roadmap for Weston-super-Mare's visual arts ecology.

UWE Bristol have supported the alliance through stewardship, match funding, and developing its partnership with Spike Island. Two new roles support partnership work.

Creative Youth Network have worked with Spike Island to deliver an Engagement commission, recruiting four young artists from their Creative Futures Programme. They have also worked with VASW to co-produce workshops.

Working as an Alliance has been an incredible opportunity to collaborate, exchange, implement change and directly invest in new work and practice.



GEORGIA GENDALL ARTIST STUDIO, 2023. PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTIST

## Practice in Place

Practice in Place is an ongoing series of conversations with artists in the region. The series profiles artists with different lived experiences and varied approaches, to learn more about 'how' artists are artists in the places they live and work.

In 2023, we shared the first three Practice in Place features written by Georgia Gendall (Cornwall), Ashanti Hare (Plymouth) and Amanda Lynch (Somerset). We're continuing to grow this exciting series in 2024.

Read the features [here](#)

## Our Audiences

### Website

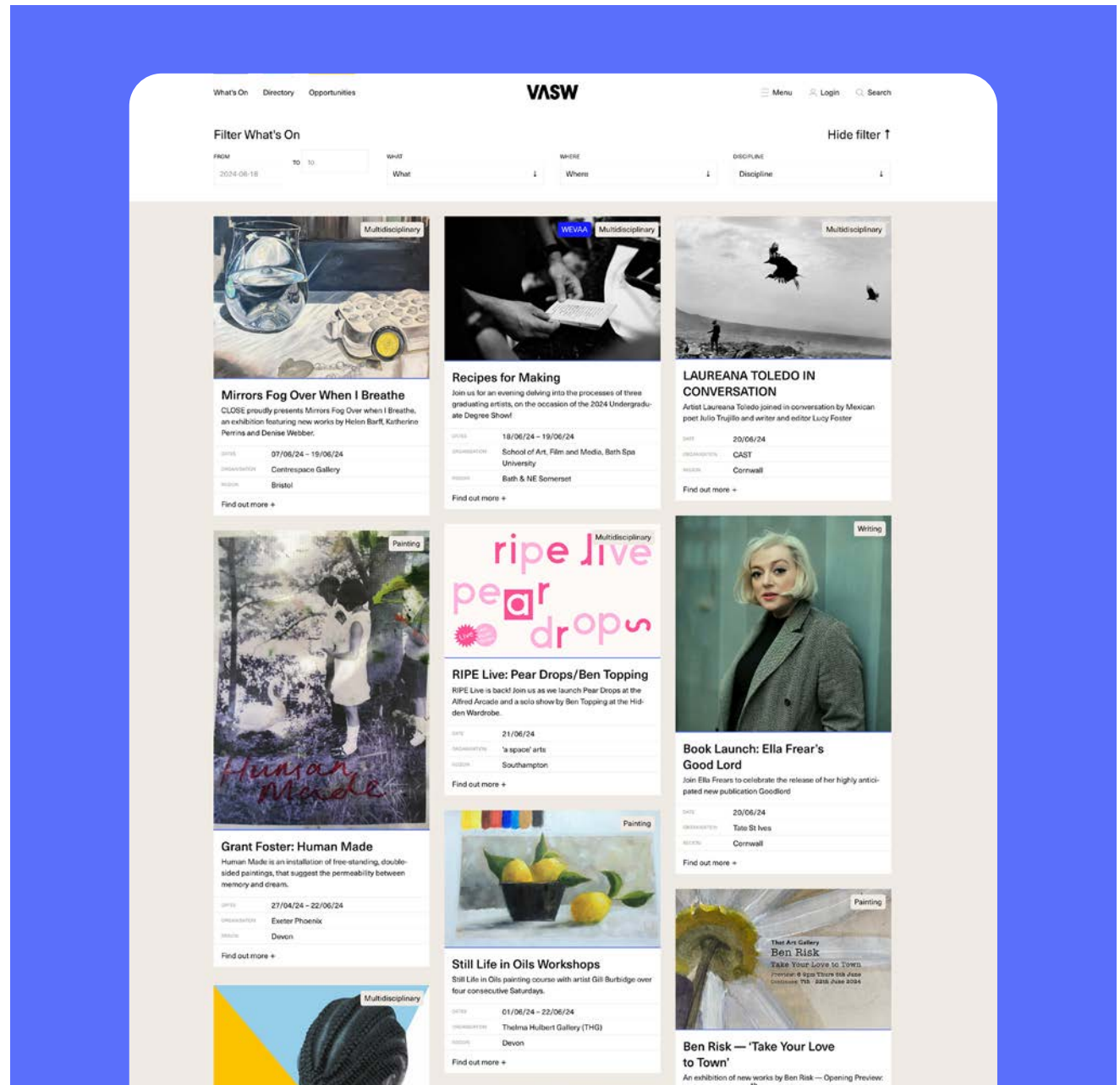
VASW’s website is user led, so any artist or visual arts organisation can add their events and activities, creating a platform that promotes the sector across the region.

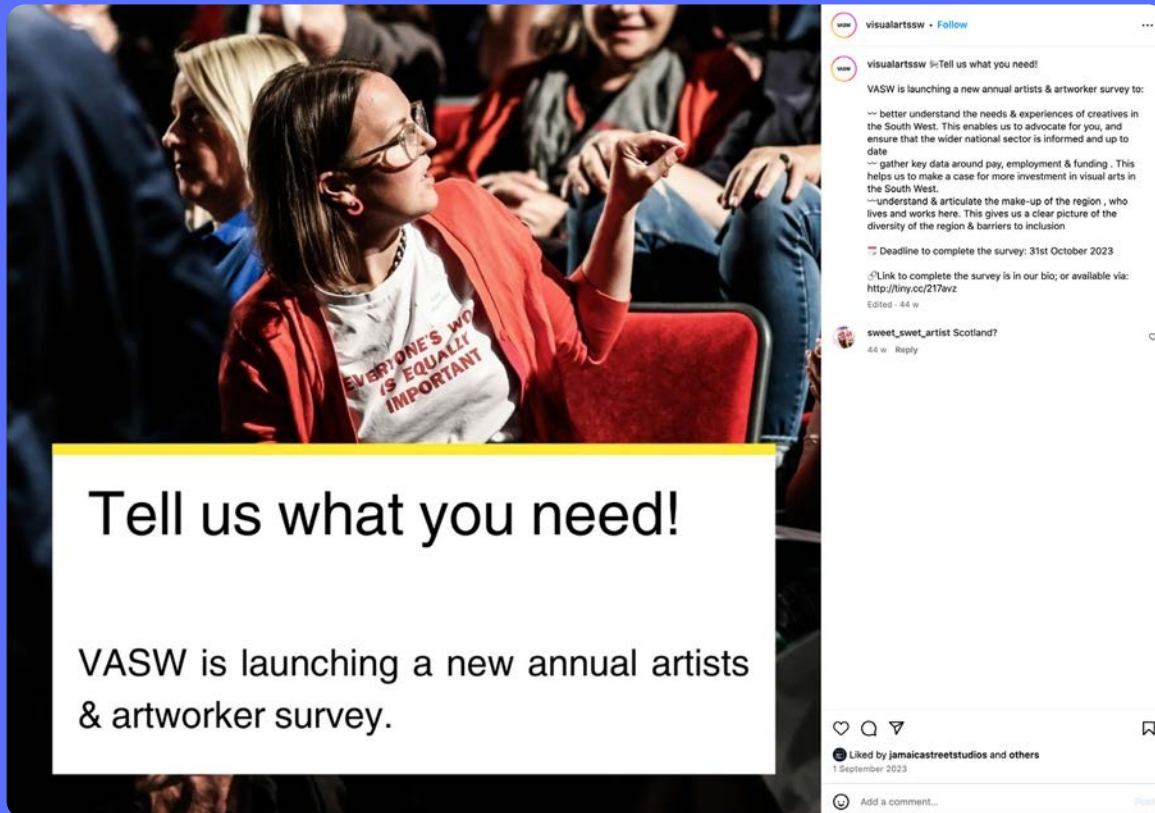
Over 2023, we recorded 27,000 total unique users and saw the number of VASW’s members and content increase.

- **Registered organisations: from 285 to 351**
- **Registered individuals: from 512 to 689**
- **What’s On listings: from 2176 to 3008**
- **Opportunities listings: from 514 to 759**

The Opportunities page was most popular, with 15,000 visits, followed by the Homepage at 9,300 and What’s On with 4,000 visits.

In the South West, users from Bristol were the most engaged, followed by those in Plymouth.





## Newsletter

Our newsletter is sent out monthly and includes our programme activity, editorial and resources, along with highlighted What's On activities and Opportunities across the region.

Over the course of 2023, newsletter subscribers increased to 2601, and higher than industry average opening and click through rates were recorded.

## Instagram and Facebook

We regularly share VASW activity, along with news and opportunities from other organisations and artists, on Instagram and Facebook. At the end of December 2023, we had 4,834 Instagram followers, an increase from 4,122 in January of the same year. Our reach on Facebook was 21,600 (a 397% increase from 2022), with 1,300 visits (a 373% increase from 2022) and 131 'follows' (a 50% increase from 2022).

## Open Call Opportunities

In 2023, VASW offered a number of opportunities including workshops, bursaries, fellowships and open calls. For WEVAA, we worked with ambassadors and Diverse Artists Network to promote opportunities as widely as possible and support applications.

### Year 3 WEVAA R&D Fellowship Open Call

We received 37 applications for the open call which invited applications for the Year 3 WEVAA R&D Fellowship.

- **11 applicants completed our optional Monitoring and Diversity Questionnaire, of these applicants:**
- **55% are female, 18% non-binary**
- **55% are LGBTQIA+**
- **27% are from the Global Majority**
- **9% are D/deaf or disabled, and 36% neurodivergent**
- **27% are from a lower socio economic background**

### Year 3 WEVAA R&D Bursary Open Call

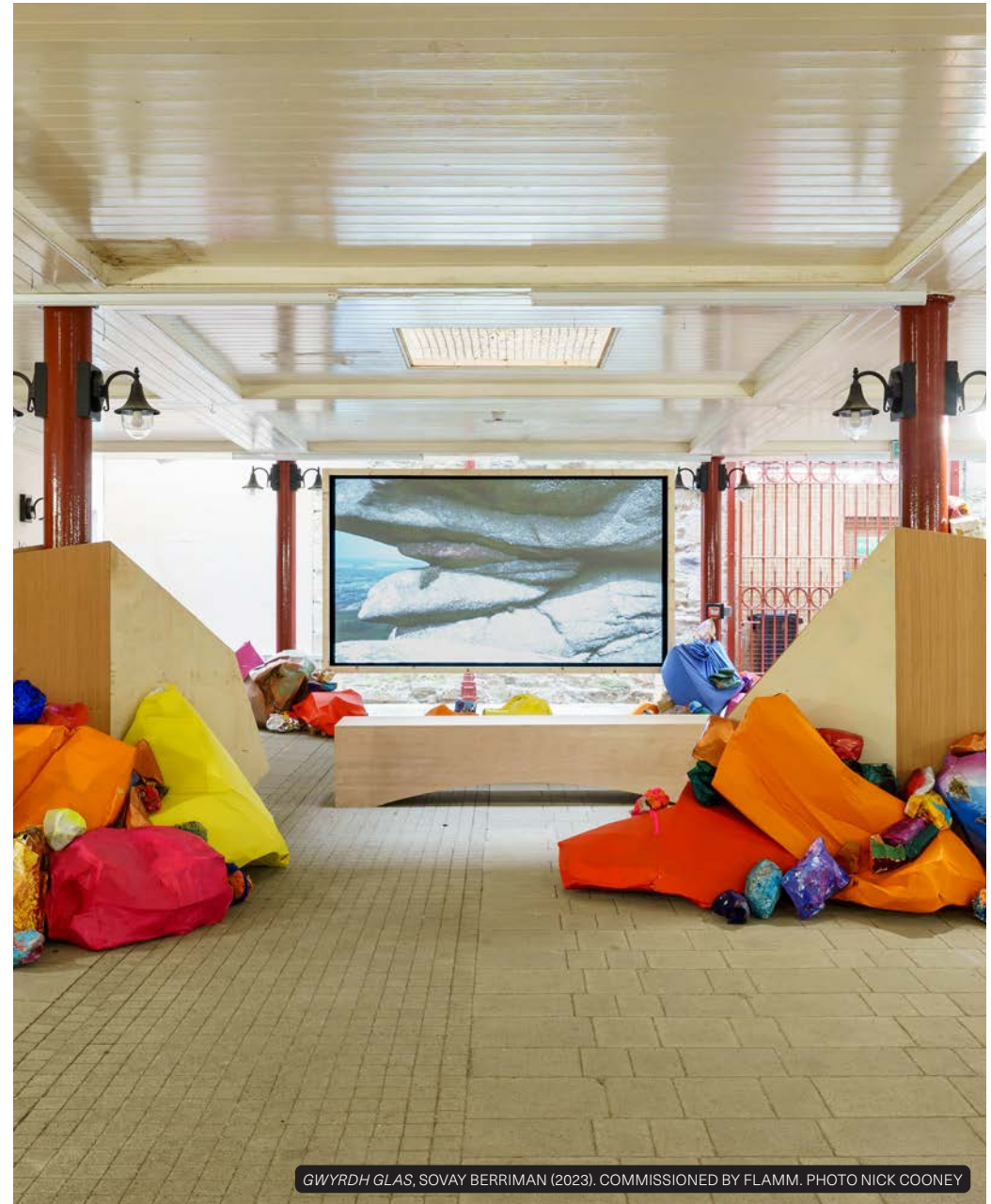
We received 76 applications for the open call which invited applications for the Year 3 WEVAA R&D Bursary.

- **25 applicants completed our optional Monitoring and Diversity Questionnaire, of these applicants:**
- **56% are female,**
- **56% are LGBTQIA+**
- **36% are from the Global Majority**
- **28% are D/deaf or disabled, and 40% neurodivergent**
- **36% are from a lower socioeconomic background**

## How Can I Stay? Open Call

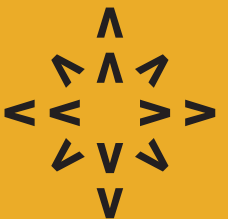
We received 48 applications for the open call which invited applications from artists and programmers to host a gathering for creative practitioners in rural contexts.

- **34 of the 48 applicants completed our optional Monitoring and Diversity Questionnaire, of these applicants:**
- **64% are female, with the majority aged over 35**
- **(55% 35-49 and 23% 50-64)**
- **32% are LGBTQIA+**
- **20% are from the Global Majority**
- **23% were D/deaf or disabled, and 41% neurodivergent**





# Research and Plans for the Future



# Our Research

One of our core aims is to tackle structural and systemic issues. To do this, we undertake research, listen and respond to the needs of our community.

## Artist Associate Schemes

Supported by Art Fund, VASW worked in partnership with 'a space' arts, Aspex, CAMP, Isle of Wight Creative Network, Somerset Art Works and Spike Island to develop a collaborative programme of professional support for artists across the region.

The group worked together over a 12-month period (2022/23) to meet and share knowledge, experience and ideas about artist professional development; and to initiate new research into the identified needs of artists. This process told us that,

- **Artists join associate schemes for peer support/community and networks**
- **Schemes should offer opportunities for meetups, exhibitions and support in rural areas**
- **Artists want a cross-regional programme that prioritises mentoring and exhibitions/presentation opportunities**

From this process, we devised new initiatives for a cross-regional programme of support, for which we're currently fundraising.

## VASW Artists and Art workers Survey

In September 2023 VASW launched a new Artist and Art worker Survey. 318 responses were received from across the region.

The Survey Report highlights the needs and experiences of artists and art workers in the South West; and includes key data around pay, employment, funding, diversity and barriers to inclusion.

The priorities and stated barriers from the report will guide our work over the next two years alongside our own core aims.

[Read the Survey Report](#)

## Survey Report Overview

**71%** identify as independent

With 57% having over a decade of experience.

**75%** attended art college  
60% studied in the South West,  
38% relocated for involvement in visual arts.

### Barriers

These include studio space, cost of living, confidence, technology, access and caring responsibilities.

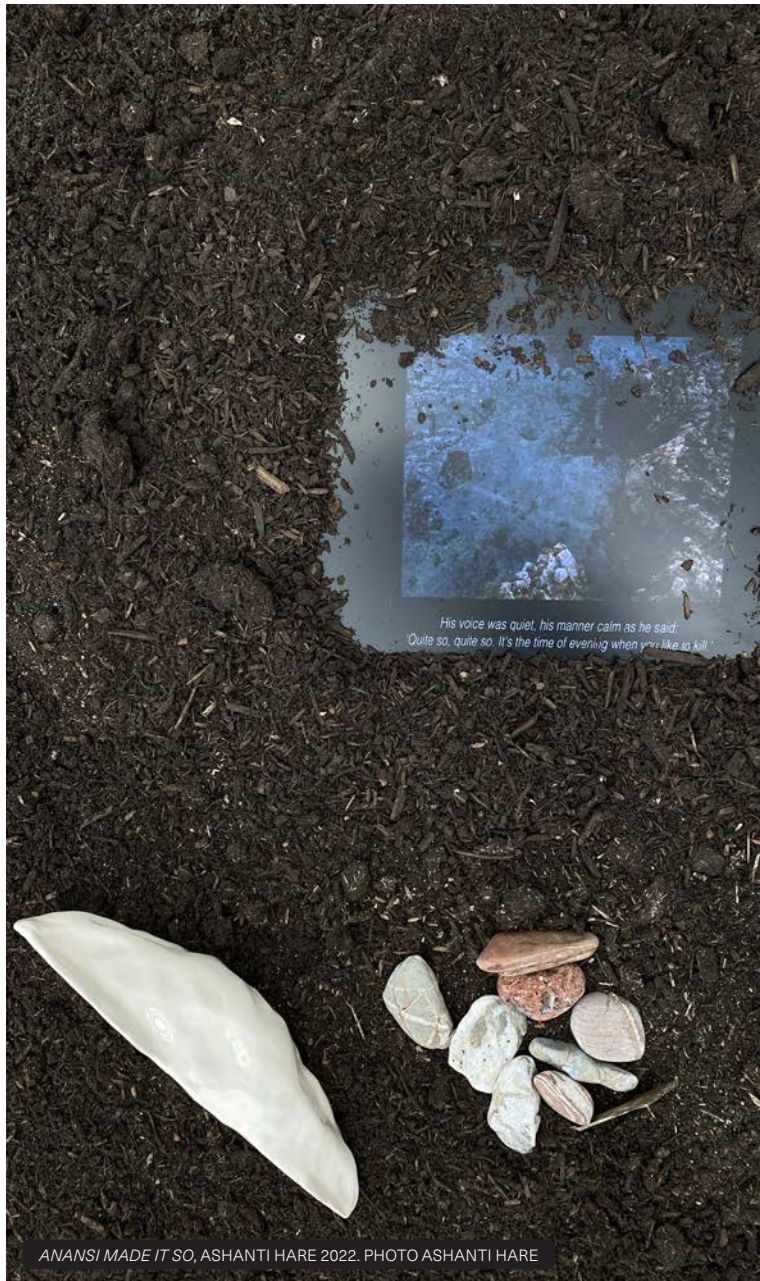
**46%** work from home

28% within a 10-mile radius, and 20% pursue visual arts online.

**13%** earn nothing from visual arts  
36% under £5k, and 5% over £30k. 29% have other income sources and 27% rely solely on visual arts income.

### Priorities

People want VASW to focus on artist development, training, support and advice, funding and opportunities, advocacy for the region and artists, and networking.



## Future Plans

We are in the process of building partnerships around a new programme that will have reach and impact across the region. This has been developed in response to our programme and research. Key areas for support identified include combating isolation, knowledge exchange, cross-regional networks, practitioners with disabilities, early career/recent graduates, opportunities for artists to test and show work, and progression for underrepresented communities.

Coming up in 2024, we're presenting *How Can I stay? (I don't want to not want to stay)*, a programme developed with members of our Steering Group that aims to support people who face barriers due to a lack of cultural and public infrastructure, access needs, isolation and injustice.

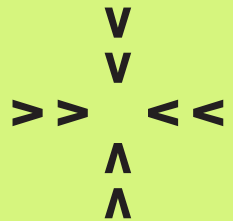
WEVAA comes to an end in 2024, and we're working with partners to shape what comes next so that we can continue to support artists living locally and develop sustainable cultural infrastructure.

And we are working with HEI partners to create a series of graduate and early career resources, that offer practical and knowledge-based insights into key areas, covering the nuts and bolts of operating professionally in the visual arts and helping to bridge the gap between education and a sustainable creative career.

Our aim is to access and disseminate resources that have a real impact, working with as many organisations as possible to create a network of opportunities that ripple and reverberate.

# Partnerships

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## National Partnerships

We partner with Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) England and our eight regional counterpart organisations: New Art West Midlands, Yorkshire Visual Arts Network, CVAN South East, CVAN North West, CVAN North East, CVAN East, CVAN London and CVAN East Midlands.

CVAN England campaigns and advocates for the visual arts sector at a national level, creating support programmes for artists and art workers and developing organisational support that promotes learning and knowledge. It works closely with Government departments, trade body organisations, and multiple sector organisations.

CVAN has worked in partnership to ensure the continuation of the Museum and Gallery Exhibition Tax Relief, which is worth £40 million to the sector; campaigned for education reform through the Creative Education Manifesto; and is now focused on first 100 days of the new Parliament, campaigning for robust investment and support for the visual arts sector. Through its Fair and Equitable programme, CVAN supports the development of equality, diversity and inclusion across the visual arts sector.

[Find out more about CVAN](#)



PHOTO CHELSEY CLIFF



UNCOMMON LAND, WILDWORKS (2023), B-SIDE FESTIVAL, PORTLAND. PHOTO PAUL BOX

## Regional Partnerships

Working collaboratively is essential. VASW aims to develop a sustainable, supportive, resilient and interconnected sector that works together to bring investment to the region.

### Together We Will

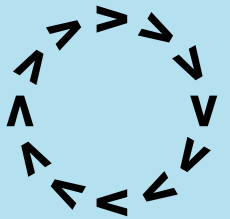
In 2023 VASW developed a region-wide partnership with nine organisations (Somerset Art Works; Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Honiton; The Box, Plymouth; East Quay, Watchet, Somerset; Harbour House Gallery, Kinsbridge, Devon; Grays Wharf, Cornwall; b-side Festival; and 'a space' arts, Southampton) to take forward Together We Will, a set of recommendations that were devised by four Artworker Advisory Groups with the aim of increasing equality of access to the visual arts, fostering more inclusive, fair and hospitable working cultures.

We are now working on ways to take the recommendations forward through a pilot programme, new resources and editorial.

[Read the Together We Will recommendations](#)

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# Thanks and Acknowledgements





VASW would like to thank our funders and partners Arts Council England, Art Fund, Spike Island and the CVAN national network.

A special thanks to our team and Steering Group who are all incredibly committed, dedicated and passionate about the development of the Visual Arts Sector in the South West.



Funded by:



Partners:



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ARTS  
SOUTH WEST**

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